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SACRAMENTO - SAN JOAQUIN

DELTA CONSERVANCY

A California State Agency

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Program and Policy Subcommittee Meeting Summary Report July 23, 2014

ATTENDEES

All Subcommittee members were present and therefore a quorum was established: Jim Provenza, chair; Steve Chappell; Mike Eaton; Darla Guenzler; Ken Vogel.

MEETING SUMMARY

Delta Restoration Hub. The Subcommittee members heard a presentation about the Delta Restoration Hub by Executive Officer Campbell Ingram. The proposed Delta Restoration Hub is intended to address the high levels of integration needed to meet the challenges of designing and implementing restoration projects to meet the coequal goals. Delta ecosystem restoration poses great scientific and technical challenges because restoration actions will generate cascading effects across physical, ecological, and social dimensions. Creating an environment where planning and informed choices guide the sequence of restoration events (location, pace, and scale) will be critical to produce desirable social and ecological outcomes. The proposal is for a three-year pilot project; cost is approximately \$10 million. Funding could come from donations, bridge funding from private foundations, water bond money, and possible fees for users of the system.

Subcommittee members questioned if there was a connection to the Delta Plan's consistency determination process, and if so, was there a concern that participation in the Hub could shift from voluntary to mandatory by the Delta Stewardship Council (DSC). It was pointed out that the DSC does not make consistency determinations, project proponents do. Having a tool like the Hub could be beneficial as project proponents make their consistency determinations.

Another Subcommittee member questioned if Delta residents have participated in developing this proposal. It was explained that since the Hub will help Delta restoration efforts develop better projects—both current and future—few Delta residents want to participate in any conversation that could be perceived as supporting the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP). That led to a discussion about how the Conservancy is perceived by some in the Delta as championing the BDCP. The Subcommittee acknowledged the Conservancy has a nuanced and narrow line to follow, but it needed to be careful not to cross over that line and destroy the credibility it had built up over the years. There was consensus that while the Conservancy is not promoting the BDCP, it is trying to be realistic about having to deal with whatever comes from the ongoing process.

The Subcommittee advised staff to refine its presentation to the Board by highlighting the message that the Conservancy is trying to get project proponents to have successful projects by bringing in local voices into the development stage of those projects and addressing local concerns. The Subcommittee also requested that the presentation address how Delta communities could be included in future Hub discussions and describe how

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local concerns will be addressed. (A fuller presentation about the Delta Restoration Hub is provided to the Board under a separate agenda item.)

Data Summit Review. The Subcommittee received information about the Delta Science Program's Data Summit, held June 5-6, 2014. The Conservancy's Assistant Executive Officer, Shakoora Azimi-Gaylon, was on the summit steering committee. The summit brought together scientists, resource managers, decision makers, academia, stakeholders, and interested citizens in discussing the new era of information and knowledge management—sometimes referred to as “big data.” The summit sessions were designed to shed light on the challenges associated with using disparate, large-scale, diverse, and high-resolution data sets in complex decision making processes. Staff informed subcommittee members that the June 5th sessions were webcast and archives of those presentations are available online at <http://dsc.videoss.com/archives/>.

Update About Delta Water Bonds. The Subcommittee discussed the rapidly changing legislative environment regarding the various water bonds under consideration, in particular, the bills authored by Senator Lois Wolk and Assembly Member Anthony Rendon. Of particular concern for the Subcommittee members is the characterization of the Conservancy and related attempts to limit or remove funding for the Conservancy. It was noted that those efforts countered the Legislative intent of establishing the Conservancy and that the value in the Conservancy is that it has responsibilities for both ecosystem restoration and economic development.

Conservancy Meeting with Yolo County. The Subcommittee received highlights of this meeting that took place on April 24, 2014. At that meeting, respective Conservancy and Yolo County staff discussed information about ecosystem restoration efforts and opportunities for partnerships. Three such opportunities were:

- Identifying potential grant funding for joint ecosystem restoration projects
- Implementing Yolo County's agricultural improvement ideas
- Working together in forums such as the Delta Restoration Network, the Integrated Water Management Plan processes, and floodplain management planning efforts

Staff indicated to the Subcommittee its intention to have similar meetings with staff from the remaining Delta counties and will report results of those meetings at future subcommittee meetings.

Indicators Report. The Subcommittee received a summary of the Conservancy's efforts to develop a set of Delta indicators. The idea is to develop a suite of indicators that can be used to track trends, successes, or failures of projects that can help with decision making regarding future project funding. Developing a suite of indicators can assist in identifying a baseline for the Delta economy, social well-being, and the environment.

Among the challenges of developing indicators is that the Delta intersects the geo-political regions that are traditionally used to collect relevant data. Another challenge is that much of the information that would be most beneficial to collect is layered. For example, working landscapes have both economic and habitat value.

The Subcommittee recommended to staff to include public health indicators into the white paper. (A fuller presentation about the proposed Indicators Report is provided to the Board under a separate agenda item.)

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Branding and Marketing Report. The Subcommittee received a written report about the status of the Delta Branding and Marketing project. This is a joint project with the Delta Protection Commission, and the first phase—developing a Delta logo—is nearing completion. A new survey regarding what to call the Delta ran from mid-June through July 7th. Approximately 70 percent of respondents voted for the “Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta”. The Phase II contract award is under protest, but is expected to be awarded soon. (A fuller presentation about the branding and marketing project is provided to the Board under a separate agenda item.)

Program Updates. The Subcommittee received program updates from the Ecosystem Restoration Program and the Education and Outreach Program. Highlights include a new \$250,000 grant for the EcoAtlas work for the Ecosystem Restoration Program and a \$2.25 million grant to the Education and Outreach Program to partner with the Water Education Foundation for various environmental education projects.

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