



SACRAMENTO - SAN JOAQUIN

**DELTA CONSERVANCY**

A California State Agency

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***Program and Policy Subcommittee Update***

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**June 19, 2019**

In attendance were Board Members Dolly Sandoval (Program and Policy Subcommittee Chair) and Jim Provenza; Liaison Advisor Sandra O’Roak; Deputy Attorney General Nicole Rinke, Counsel to the Conservancy; Executive Officer Campbell Ingram; several Conservancy staff; and other interested parties.

**Delta Foundation**

Continuing the discussion from prior Program and Policy Subcommittee (Subcommittee) meetings, Executive Officer Ingram summarized steps taken to date to explore the possibility of engaging or establishing a Delta-focused foundation. Conservancy staff met with the Board of Directors for the Yolo Basin Foundation to discuss the potential to partner with the Delta Conservancy. The Foundation Board remains interested in exploring specific opportunities.

**Next Steps:** Once the Conservancy has identified specific Proposition 68 eligible projects that may benefit from partnership with the Yolo Basin Foundation, staff will reach out to further explore a partnership.

**Land Ownership**

The Subcommittee continued discussion from previous meetings exploring the feasibility, potential benefits, and challenges of the Conservancy holding easements and/or title to land on behalf of the State. Recent conversations have indicated a preference, of current land-owning agencies and local interests, for Conservancy ownership of lands currently held by other agencies due to the benefit of local involvement on the Conservancy Board. Long term downward trends in economic viability of deeply subsided islands, combined with ongoing subsidence and sea level rise, require that the State and counties begin to explore their respective responsibilities for long-term ownership and management of islands. Delta agencies, including the Conservancy, continue to get inquiries from land owners wanting to sell to the State.

**Next Steps:** Continue to gather information related to land ownership and management needs, costs, and issues.

**Proposition 68**

Program Manager Laura Jensen provided an overview of progress in developing the Proposition 68 grant program. The program is conducting outreach to existing organizations and groups to learn about potential projects, organizational capacity and needs, and how the program should be structured to be most effective. Draft grant guidelines will be available in the fall, followed by public meetings and a

public comment period. The guidelines will be presented to the Board for consideration in November and if approved, the grant program would open in early 2020.

**Next Steps:** Continue outreach efforts and release draft grant guidelines in fall 2019.

### **Delta Farmer Engagement**

Program Manager Laura Jensen provided an overview of meetings that occurred in winter 2018 and spring 2019, with a small group of Delta farmers that came together at the Conservancy's request to share their perspective on how the Conservancy can benefit Delta agriculture and the larger community. The group discussed if there is the need for agricultural analyses or studies that might benefit Delta agriculture and concluded that there are none at this time. The group was very generous with their time, providing input on potential projects that could be funded by the Conservancy and expressing a willingness to continue meeting if there are specific and compelling needs for their input.

**Next Steps:** Conservancy staff will incorporate feedback into appropriate programs and will continue to engage the group as needed.

### **Delegation Authority**

Executive Officer Ingram presented a request to consider increasing the Executive Officer's delegated authority to execute contracts from \$50,000 to \$250,000 to allow more efficiency in conducting Conservancy operations. All expenditures would continue to be for Board-approved programs and would be summarized in the Board meeting packet. Two recent expenditures that exceeded the current authority, one which was non-discretionary, were constrained by time requirements to get Board approval. Subcommittee members expressed concern about increasing the delegated authority as it provides a check and protection for both the Board and staff. Subcommittee members suggested a lesser increase combined with an expedited approval process that would involve Chair and Vice Chair approval for expenditures that would be constrained by the Board meeting schedule. Subsequent to the June 19, 2019 Subcommittee meeting, further review of the Conservancy's existing delegation of authority finds that the \$50,000 limit only applies to programs and projects that are not for the purposes of carrying out the adopted Strategic Plan or Implementation Plan. Therefore, there is no need to increase the delegated authority.

**Next Steps:** Staff will review the existing language at the July 24, 2019 Board meeting as part of the Program and Policy Subcommittee Update agenda item.

### **Board Meeting Schedule**

Executive Officer Ingram discussed the potential to reduce the number of Board meetings per year from six to four, with quarterly meetings in January, April, July and October. Conservancy staff aims to increase participation and reduce the recent and ongoing challenges in establishing a quorum to conduct business. Additionally, reducing the number of meetings would reduce staff workload considerably while still providing for ongoing Board oversight and interaction at a frequency that is compatible with current needs. The Conservancy would maintain the ability to call a meeting between quarters if necessary. Subcommittee members expressed concerns about going to quarterly meetings

and uncertainty that doing so would increase participation. Subcommittee members suggested that staff include an item on the agenda for the July 24, 2019 Board meeting to discuss the need to increase participation and present a recommendation for consideration.

**Next Steps:** Staff will present a recommendation for consideration at the July 24, 2019 Board meeting.

**Future Agenda Items**

- Delta Foundation
- Land Ownership
- Grant Programs Update

**Public Comments**

None

**Contact**

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