



SACRAMENTO - SAN JOAQUIN

DELTA CONSERVANCY

A California State Agency

2020 Implementation Plan

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INTRODUCTION

This Implementation Plan (Plan) articulates goals which the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy (Conservancy) has established for 2020 to implement the goals, objectives, performance measures, and metrics included in the Conservancy's 2017-2022 Strategic Plan.

The activities reflected herein are funded by the California General Fund; the California Environmental License Plate Fund; state and federal government grants; the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1), and the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68). The Conservancy continuously seeks funding to expand efforts in furtherance of its mission. Staff is discussing with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation the potential to receive a grant to expand education and outreach efforts. The Governor and the Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency have prioritized initiatives that address climate resilience activities. Should a bond measure be presented to and approved by voters in November, the Conservancy could realize funding to increase and expand initiatives.

The Conservancy approaches all aspects of its mission with a mindset of collaboration and local engagement. In 2019, the Conservancy finalized an extensive collaborative effort among scientists, policy makers, local governments, land owners, and other stakeholders to publish the *Delta Public Lands Strategy*. The Delta Mercury Exposure Program worked directly with community organizations throughout 2019 to educate them about health hazards presented from consumption of mercury contaminated fish and provided them with small grants so they could share important information with those most at risk in their communities. Other examples include extensive efforts in 2019 to connect with Delta stakeholders in shaping the new Community and Economic Enhancement Grant Program to ensure the needs of the community were reflected in the program's design. The Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality Grant Program remains a highlight of the ability of the Conservancy, its board, and local interests to work in partnership; to date the program has advanced projects with positive impacts to 4,700 acres of the Delta ecosystem.

Goals for 2020 reflect the continuation of established programs such as arundo control, Delta marketing, and the Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality Grant Program which will enter a new phase as the project stage of grants conclude and monitoring work begins. With its launch, the Community and Economic Enhancement Grant Program will contribute to a robust Delta economy through grant funding for projects that will increase public access to the Delta through recreation and tourism opportunities, historic and cultural preservation, and environmental education. Support for carbon emission reduction and land subsidence related efforts is increasing – the Conservancy will continue work to ally interests to realize funding to incentivize landscape scale land-use changes, develop pilot projects to verify greenhouse gas reductions, and develop carbon credit sale agreements. All Conservancy efforts in 2020 will benefit from expanded outreach and communications.

Internally focused, succession planning remains a priority into 2020, with comprehensive updates to policies and procedures or creation of them anew, focused recruitment to fill all positions, and workplan development supporting that objective.

AGRICULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ENHANCEMENT

The Delta is a unique natural resource of local, state, and national significance. Intertwined with this important ecological system are a rich agricultural and cultural heritage, a distinguishing history, and an abundance of recreational opportunities. Preserving and enhancing the Delta’s agricultural, cultural, historic, and recreational assets can play a valuable role in enhancing Delta communities and economies.

The Conservancy has worked closely with the Delta Protection Commission over the years to synergistically advance the priorities of both agencies in support of Delta communities and economies; that partnership will continue in 2020. The Conservancy will significantly increase its support in 2020 as it initiates the Community and Economic Enhancement Grant Program.

Community and Economic Enhancement Grant Program

Beginning in January, the Conservancy will accept concept proposals on an ongoing basis for the Community and Economic Enhancement Grant Program. This new, noncompetitive, grant program is made possible by funding allocated by the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68). The Conservancy will assist project proponents as needed to develop viable concepts into comprehensive proposals that may be considered for funding by the Board.

Table 1: Community and Economic Enhancement Grant Program

2020 Project Goals	Timeline
Begin accepting concept proposals	Qtr 1
Assist project proponents to develop comprehensive proposals	Ongoing
Manage awarded grants	Ongoing
Funding: \$12,000,000 from Proposition 68 for duration of the program	

Delta Marketing

The Conservancy and the Delta Protection Commission (DPC) partner in assisting Delta residents and businesses to develop sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities in the Delta. The Conservancy and DPC created and worked with the Delta Marketing Task Force to create a *Delta Tourism Awareness 5-year Marketing Plan* in 2017, the *Delta Sign Plan* in 2018, and the Delta recreation and tourism website VisitCADelta.com. The Conservancy contracted with DPC to implement components of the marketing and sign plans. In 2019, DPC worked with the task force to design and produce 11 welcome and wayfaring signs. In 2020, the agencies will coordinate with Caltrans, local jurisdictions, and the California Conservation Corps to obtain permits and install signs at locations identified in the plan. Complimenting the signs will be distribution of a map, 6,000 copies of which were printed in 2019, that shows recreational opportunities in the Delta and provides heritage and cultural facts.

The website VisitCADelta.com highlights businesses and recreational opportunities; it is a key strategy of the Marketing Plan and is noted on the aforementioned map. While the DPC, with support from the Conservancy, has managed the website thus far, management was intended to rest with a Delta entity. However, an entity with capacity to take this on has yet to be identified. In 2020, the Conservancy and DPC will collaborate to create a sustainable management plan for the site.

Table 2: Delta Marketing

2020 Project Goals	Timeline
Distribute recreation maps	Ongoing
Pursue sustainable management plan for visitCADelta.com	Ongoing
Install 11 signs per Delta Sign Plan	Qtr 4
Funding: Maps, sign plan and installation: \$ 45,000	

ECOSYSTEM VIABILITY

The Conservancy, in collaboration with myriad partners, is working on the following initiatives to protect, enhance, and restore the Delta ecosystem.

Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality Grant Program

This competitive grant program focuses on multi-benefit ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration projects that address at least one of the following.

- Ecosystem Protection, Restoration, and Enhancement
- Water Quality
- Water-related Agricultural Sustainability

Through this program, the Conservancy has demonstrated its capacity to align state and local interests to make great progress – this is the hallmark of the Conservancy’s mission. As of January 1, 2020, the Conservancy has implemented four grant cycles and awarded almost \$36.3 million for 27 projects that collectively increase ecosystem resilience of approximately 4,700 acres. The Conservancy anticipates opening the fifth, and possibly last solicitation in the summer of 2021, with approximately \$5 million in available funding. As grants for implementation projects are closed, Conservancy staff will continue to work with the grantees as they conduct post-project management and monitoring of the projects for at least 15 years.

In the first half of 2020, the Department of Finance will complete a routine audit of the Conservancy’s Proposition 1 program. The Conservancy will consider the audit results and adjust its granting process as needed.

Table 3: Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality Grant Program

2020 Project Goals	Timeline
Manage active and closed grants	Ongoing
Plan Cycle 5 solicitation	Ongoing
Adjust granting processes based on audit results	As Required
Funding: \$50,000,000 from Proposition 1 for the duration of the program	

Invasive Species Coordination, Control, and Restoration

Arundo Control and Restoration

Arundo donax is an invasive riparian plant that damages levees and waterway banks, utilizes more water than native vegetation, and displaces native plants and wildlife. Phase 1 of this project was initiated in 2014. Through its partners, Solano Resource Conservation District and Sonoma Ecology Center, the Conservancy completed maps and prioritization for control of *Arundo* sites and initiated a control and restoration pilot project in the Cache Slough Complex. The Delta Conservancy is also collaborating with the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Research Service on biocontrol agent release trials and

integrated biological/chemical control at three Delta sites. The Conservancy is seeking additional funding for Phase 2 to expand Arundo control and restoration activities within the Delta.

Delta Inter-Agency Invasive Species Coordination (DIISC) Team

The Conservancy leads this forum for state and federal agency participants to exchange information, coordinate activities, and identify research needs and funding sources. The DIISC Team holds quarterly coordination meetings and organizes a biennial Delta Invasive Species Symposium. The Conservancy is in the early stages of coordinating with the DIISC team and other stakeholders to explore the development of a strategy for early detection and rapid response to invasive species.

Table 4: Invasive Species Coordination, Control, and Restoration

2020 Project Goals	Timeline
Write white paper summarizing 2019 Delta Invasive Species Symposium	Qtr 2
Coordinate arundo control and restoration activities at Phase 1 sites	Ongoing
Develop funding and implementation strategy for Phase 2	Ongoing
Facilitate quarterly DIISC meetings	Ongoing
Develop Delta interagency collaboration strategy for early detection and rapid response to invasive species	Ongoing
Funding: Phase 1 Arundo: ~\$1 million Department of Water Resources grant and ~\$91,000 U.S. Department of Agriculture grant	

Land Ownership and Management

The Conservancy’s enabling legislation authorizes the organization to hold title and easements for lands within the Delta. During outreach for the development of the Strategic Plan, staff heard repeated requests from agencies and community members to explore and define the Conservancy’s potential role in future land ownership and management. Staff began exploring the issue in 2019 by developing a draft white paper and having discussions with the Conservancy Board’s Program and Policy Subcommittee (PPS). In 2020, staff will continue to refine the white paper based on research and engagement with the PPS and will provide updates at publicly noticed Board meetings. A land ownership and management policy or strategy may result from this effort.

Table 5: Land Ownership and Management

2020 Project Goals	Timeline
Refine draft ownership/management white paper	Ongoing
Provide updates to the Board	Ongoing
Funding: General operating budget	

Project Tracking, Reporting, and Improved Data Integration and Access

For the past several years, the Conservancy has worked with many partners to identify needs, secure funding, and implement multiple projects to facilitate project tracking, reporting, and improved data integration and access to support habitat restoration and water quality management in the Delta.

With funding from U.S. EPA, the Conservancy is implementing the Delta Aquatic Resources Inventory (DARI) project. DARI will result in a standardized mapping system and base map of aquatic resources for the Delta. Activities planned for 2020 include integrating DARI into EcoAtlas and a training for regional data stewards from state and local agencies to teach them DARI mapping standard operating procedures (SOP).

Table 6: Project Tracking/Reporting and Improved Data Integration/Access

2020 Project Goals	Timeline
Work with restoration project managers to enter or update project information in EcoAtlas	Ongoing
Update the DARI mapping SOP and develop protocols for submitting data and maintaining the DARI base map	Qtr 3
Integrate DARI into EcoAtlas	Qtr 3
Training for regional data stewards	Qtr 3
Funding: DARI: \$300,000 U.S. EPA grant	

Pesticides Management Best Management Practices

The Conservancy, in coordination with the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition and the San Joaquin and Delta Water Quality Coalition, will implement a suite of best management practices to reduce non-point source pollution and improve water quality in the Delta. The goal of this project is to develop, certify, and implement Farm Water Quality Improvement Plans (Farm Plans) through the Fish Friendly Farming (FFF) Program to reduce the generation and transport to waterbodies of agricultural chemicals, sediment, and nutrients from sites within the Delta. These efforts utilize tools and build upon outreach funded by the Conservancy’s Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality Grant Program.

Table 7: Best Management Practices

2020 Project Goals	Timeline
Develop a list of high priority outreach areas	Qtr 2
Send introductory letters and enrollment information to landowners and operators in/near high priority outreach areas	Qtr 2
Establish a Technical Advisory Committee	Qtr 3
Conduct workshop with enrolled properties	Qtr 4
Funding: \$399,400 State Water Resources Control Board grant	

Waterway Cleanups

The Conservancy participates in two annual waterway cleanup events: the Delta Waterway Cleanup and the Sacramento Area Creeks Council Creek Week Cleanup. The Conservancy partners with the Delta Protection Commission, the Sacramento Area Creeks Council, the California Coastal Commission, Sacramento County Parks, Sacramento Regional Sanitation District, California State Parks, and corporate and non-profit volunteer groups. The goals of the cleanups are to: (1) protect and improve water quality; (2) raise awareness and understanding of good stewardship practices; (3) provide the community with environmental stewardship opportunities; and (4) collect data on types and amounts of trash in the Delta. Data collection contributes to the development of community-based science efforts across the state and provides a snapshot of the trash moving through the Delta.

The Conservancy will continue to participate in organizing and conducting these events and leverage them to provide community outreach and environmental education related to previously noted goals, building on the success of 2019 in which the Conservancy’s involvement in the Creek Week Cleanup resulted in 43 new subscribers to the Conservancy’s email list, more than 12,000 impressions on Twitter in one month alone, and distribution of nearly 8,000 pieces of collateral that included the Conservancy’s logo.

Table 8: Delta Waterway Cleanups

2020 Project Goals	Timeline
Clean-up and community outreach and environmental education events	Qtr 2 & Qtr 3
Collect data on types and amounts of trash in the Delta	Ongoing
Funding: General operating budget	

DELTA CARBON MANAGEMENT

The Conservancy Board adopted an updated climate change policy in 2017. The policy guides the Conservancy in developing, establishing, and supporting projects that mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and that can increase the system’s capacity to adapt to climate change effects. For the past several years, the Conservancy has worked with a large partnership to address the ongoing subsidence that threatens western Delta communities, agriculture, and the state and federal water projects, and that produces more than 2,000,000 tons of carbon emissions per year. The partnership developed a California Wetland Protocol which was adopted by the American Carbon Registry (ACR) in the spring of 2017. The partnership is now working with public and private landowners and project developers to develop pilot projects to verify greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions. Verifying GHG reductions will allow landowners and developers to realize revenue by trading credits on the voluntary carbon market.

The Conservancy continues to work with the California Air Resources Board to encourage their consideration of adopting the ACR protocol under the Cap-and-Trade compliance market, thereby more than doubling the value of the credits, which further incentivizes change. Staff continues to create a coalition of interested organizations to develop appropriate messages and strategies to realize additional funding that can incentivize landscape scale land-use changes that will stop ongoing subsidence and resulting emissions. In early 2020, the Conservancy will receive results of the 2019 third party validation/verification of three Department of Water Resources (DWR) wetland projects, certifying the first carbon credits for market. Additionally, the partnership has been instrumental in pursuing funding for planning and implementation of several managed wetland and rice cultivation pilot efforts.

These activities will continue in 2020 by partnering with DWR to develop carbon credit sale agreements for existing wetlands on Sherman and Twitchell Islands. That effort notwithstanding, effecting meaningful change requires significant investment in subsidence and related carbon emissions actions in the Delta. The Conservancy is seeking funding up to \$100 million to implement actions that will allow significant progress.

Table 9: Delta Carbon Management

2020 Project Goals	Timeline
Develop, in coordination with DWR, carbon credit sale agreements for existing managed wetlands on Sherman and Twitchell Islands	Qtr 2
Seek funding to support future projects	Ongoing
Funding: \$ 45,000 General operating budget	

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Environmental education and outreach is an important component of the Delta Conservancy programs, which is reflected throughout the Conservancy’s initiatives. Current outreach strategies include posts on social media (Facebook and Twitter), flyers and other collateral about Conservancy projects, and promotions of campaigns such as Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Week and Creek Week. In 2020, the Conservancy will continue to maintain and enhance its website; expand social media profiles; develop new educational materials, including fact sheets for Conservancy programs; increase participation in events in and of relevance to the Delta, and otherwise broaden outreach as resources allow.

Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Week

For the past two years, the Legislature designated a week in September as Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Week. The designated week is a focus of Conservancy education and outreach initiatives; past promotion included social media posts and a press release coordinated with Senator Bill Dodd’s office. In 2020, the Conservancy looks to expand those efforts to potentially include a community activity, Delta Week-specific collateral, features in online and print publications, and possible media opportunities.

Table 10: Environmental Education and Outreach

2020 Project Goals	Timeline
Conduct education and outreach for Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Week	Qtr 3
Education and outreach via social media, events, and other opportunities	Ongoing
Develop fact sheets for Conservancy programs	Ongoing
Funding: General operating budget	

Delta Mercury Exposure Reduction Program

The Conservancy takes an active role in educating the public about potential health hazards through the Delta Mercury Exposure Reduction Program (Delta MERP). Delta MERP is a collaborative effort among federal and State agencies, local governments, tribes, and community organizations to conduct exposure reduction activities to address the health risks to consumers of Delta fish. This is a multi-year program, coordinated with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, that is funded through June 2020. Through then, the Conservancy will continue to coordinate and post fish consumption advisory signs, provide training and educational messaging to the Delta community, and oversee the Southeast Asian Assistance Center’s (SAAC) evaluation of the efficacy of previously posted fish consumption advisory signs. The Conservancy will provide final program results at a stakeholder meeting. After funding expires, the Conservancy will continue to maintain information on its web page and conduct outreach as resources allow.

Table 11: Mercury Exposure Reduction Program

2020 Project Goals	Timeline
Evaluate effectiveness of posted advisory signs	Qtr 1
Convene stakeholder meeting	Qtr 2
Coordinate and post advisory signs	Ongoing
Conduct outreach to Delta communities	Ongoing
Funding: \$170,000 from the State Water Resources Control Board	

Timeline items listed as ongoing will continue until funding for the program expires in June 2020.

ADMINISTRATION

In 2019, the Conservancy focused on identifying critical functions and continued succession planning by designating secondary personnel for key functions, cross training to ensure proficiency, and documenting processes and procedures. This work will continue into 2020 as the Conservancy aims to have all positions filled.

While the Conservancy cannot avoid turnover due to staff seeking advancement, it can engage and empower staff and create an environment to help attract and retain quality staff. The Conservancy will continue to monitor staff engagement and make continuous improvement efforts toward maintaining high morale and employee satisfaction.

In 2020, Conservancy staff and management will develop work plans as an internal planning tool to aid in tracking annual workload and accomplishments, optimizing use of resources, analyzing budget to task balance, and assist with strategic planning to meet priorities. Included in those plans will be creating and maintaining accessibility of the Conservancy’s web content, a new and significant workload.

Table 12: Administration

2020 Project Goals	Timeline
Proposition 1 Grant Program acquisition process and template	Qtr 2
Submit and update State Leadership Accountability Act Implementation plan	Qtr 2 & Qtr 4
Develop internal work plans	Qtr 2
Develop records retention schedule	Qtr 3
Submit indirect cost rate proposal	Qtr 4
Develop Workforce Plan and Succession Plan	Qtr 4
Develop new/update existing policies and procedures	Qtr 4
Ensure accessibility of conservancy web content	Ongoing
Submit financial reports and information (such as Governor’s budget building, bond accountability reporting, update System for Award Management)	As Required
Fulfill human resource related mandates (such as Disability Advisory Committee)	As Required
Various administrative and operational requirements (e.g. State Agency Recycle Campaign and State Agency Reporting System reports, Contracting Activity Report and Improvement Plans, Continuity Plan)	As Required
Participate in Audits (e.g. Dept. of Finance audits of bond funded grant programs, State Personnel Board audit of human resources practices, General Services audit of purchasing and procurement)	As Required
Funding: General operating budget with proportional support from Proposition 1 and Proposition 68 funds	

DELTA CONSERVANCY 2017 – 2022 STRATEGIC PLAN – GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: Delta Agricultural and Economic Enhancement

Delta Economic and Agricultural Enhancement

1. Work directly with local land owners, farmers, and others to analyze the state of Delta agriculture and identify priority agricultural investments and economic offset strategies for agricultural land conversions
2. Establish an agricultural stakeholder group to consult on agricultural sustainability strategy identification and evaluation; and on agricultural sustainability project planning, prioritization, and implementation
3. Support the Delta Marketing Task Force and Delta Protection Commission in identifying and securing funding to implement priority objectives in the Five-Year Delta Marketing Plan in cooperation with local business stakeholders

Ecosystem Restoration and Protection

4. Support water quality improvements on working lands by coordinating with agencies and local interests to identify and implement best management practices
5. Increase accessibility and utility of regional water quality data

Grants and Funding

6. Fund Proposition 1-eligible agricultural sustainability projects that provide ecosystem and/or watershed protection and/or restoration benefits
7. Identify, track, and pursue funding opportunities to support implementation of agricultural analysis-identified priority investments
8. Identify, track, and pursue funding to support implementation of priority objectives in the Five-Year Delta Marketing Plan, recreation and tourism projects, and historical preservation projects

GOAL 2: Delta Ecosystem Viability

Ecosystem Restoration and Protection

1. Protect, restore, or enhance habitat and improve water quality through implementation of grant-funded projects
2. Strengthen the coordination of water quality monitoring, data integration, implementation of best management practices, and environmental education efforts in partnership with existing Delta watershed efforts

3. Complete regional restoration strategies and priorities for the Cache Slough Complex and for additional region(s) in coordination with Delta stakeholders; collaborate with partners to implement high priority projects identified in regional plans
4. Determine appropriate conditions under which the Conservancy would consider land ownership/management
5. Continue to implement an invasive species control program and implement other on-the-ground projects to protect, restore, or enhance Delta habitat

Delta Economic and Agricultural Enhancement

6. Collaborate with Delta interests and agencies to develop programs and promote incentives for land management projects that reduce carbon emissions
7. Evaluate public use opportunities on public land in the Delta and make recommendations on how to improve opportunities for recreation and education

Grants and Funding

8. Fund Proposition 1-eligible projects that provide ecosystem protection, restoration, and enhancement; water quality; and/or water-related agricultural sustainability benefits
9. Seek funding and project development resources for high priority restoration projects identified through regional planning efforts

GOAL 3: Conservancy Organizational Strength and Sustainability

Administration

1. Provide a safe, creative, inspiring, and equitable working environment for staff and management consistent with state standards
2. Employ management practices to empower staff creativity, increase staff retention, and promote organizational capabilities to match the diverse needs of the Delta community
3. Develop a staff succession plan to ensure the efficient transfer of institutional knowledge
4. Continuously evaluate and improve organizational efficiency, programmatic structure, and workplace environment
5. Enable effective and sustainable Conservancy operation within the Delta community by strengthening existing partnerships and developing lasting new partnerships with Delta agencies and local interests
6. Increase awareness of the Conservancy's achievements among funders, partners, and the public through in-person outreach, social media, and other methods

Grants and Funding

7. Diversify and expand funding sources to adequately support program work, sustain current staff, and grow staff as needed to meet program needs and Conservancy goals
8. Identify and plan for potential long-term funding scenarios to position the Conservancy to sustain and grow its programs via future bonds or other funding sources
9. Promote Conservancy goals and objectives through Board engagement to constructively support Conservancy funding efforts including the pursuit of bond funding