



**EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT**  
**July 22, 2020**

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**PROGRAM UPDATE**

**STAFFING UPDATE**

Sadly, we must say goodbye to Laura Jensen who has accepted a position as the Assistant Executive Officer of the California Water Commission. Laura has been with the Conservancy for five years and was the lead for the development of the Proposition 1 and Proposition 68 grant programs. Laura's hard work, dedication, and exceptional organizational skills were critical to the success of these programs and we thank her for all her hard work. This is a great opportunity for Laura; please join me in wishing her the best.

Please welcome Dr. Rachel Wigginton, our newly-hired Senior Environmental Scientist. Rachel will be applying her scientific expertise to the Conservancy's various projects and representing the Conservancy within the Delta science community. Rachel came to California from Kentucky ten years ago to pursue graduate research in wetland ecology and conservation management. Before coming to the Conservancy, Rachel was with the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, leading the agency's effort to review and update its Suisun Marsh Protection Plan and Local Protection Program. Rachel started with the Conservancy on July 6<sup>th</sup>.

**HAPPY 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY TO THE DELTA CONSERVANCY**

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy. The Delta Conservancy was created as part of the Delta Reform Act passed in late 2009, and in March of 2010, the Delta Conservancy Board met for the first time. We have accomplished so much since that first Board meeting as the Conservancy has evolved and grown into our role as a state partner for ecosystem restoration and economic development in the Delta and Suisun Marsh.

Significant funding for the Conservancy arrived with the passage of Proposition 1 in late 2014. Staff went to work developing and implementing our Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality grant program, that to date has resulted in 29 community-supported projects enhancing over 8,000 acres in the Delta. With the more recent passage of Proposition 68, the Conservancy has developed our Community and Economic Enhancement grant program that will fund projects that support the economic vitality of the Delta and serve its disadvantaged communities. In addition to these grant programs, the Conservancy has led and supported many important collaborative planning and outreach efforts. We have also been a driving force for the development of market-based incentives to address subsidence and related carbon emissions. The Conservancy was honored when the American Carbon Registry presented the 2017 Innovation Award to the developers of this landmark methodology for California wetland restoration.

The Delta Conservancy has maximized the funding and resources available to us, and our staff and Board have realized the intent of our enabling legislation and become a trusted and effective partner. The Conservancy has clearly demonstrated the value of a state partnership and what can be accomplished in the Delta when we work together.

I would like to personally thank all past and current Board members and Ex-Officio Legislative members for their guidance and contributions to our achievements. And to past staff, many of whom have gone on to significant leadership roles, and our current team of bright and dedicated public servants; thank you for all your hard work and for making the Conservancy a great organization.

Our stage is set for a bright future as we continue to engage the Delta community. What comes next for the Delta Conservancy will depend largely on available funding, there is no limit to what we can do if resourced to do it! Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Delta Conservancy!! Here's to many more.

### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

All Conservancy staff continue to work from home with the expectation that this will continue until a vaccine is approved. Staff have done an excellent job adapting to our new reality and continue to be very productive with only minor disruptions in our workflow. We are currently developing procedures to ensure upcoming project site visits can be conducted safely and with appropriate social distancing. Larry Hughes has volunteered to be our designated Contact Tracer. He recently completed his weeklong training and will likely be called upon in the coming weeks for a six-month deployment.

### **CONTRACTS**

The Conservancy is in the process of amending the technical support contract for our Delta carbon and subsidence work. The amendment will increase the budget by \$80,000.00 and add two additional pilot projects to the scope of work. The original agreement supported project development and third party validation/verification of carbon offsets for the three Department of Water Resources managed wetlands projects on Sherman and Twitchell islands. The amendment will support similar activities, including project development, carbon flux estimations, monitoring program development, and third-party validation/verification for two additional pilot projects. Staff are currently working closely with two land owners, one of whom is interested in converting over 1,000 acres to rice cultivation and the other interested in engaging the carbon market for an existing, recently converted, rice project of several hundred acres and a future managed wetland project of approximately 1,000 acres. The contract amendment is awaiting final approval by the Department of General Services and should be executed within the next several weeks.

### **ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM**

#### **Nutria Eradication:**

Please see Attachment 2 for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's June 2020 update for the Nutria Program. We are planning to provide a detailed Program overview at future Board meeting.

#### **Delta Subsidence and Carbon Emissions:**

The Conservancy continues to work to develop pilot projects and support land owners in their efforts to explore carbon market opportunities. A Delta Carbon overview and update will be provided as Item 10 on the agenda for this meeting.

**Water Resilience Portfolio:**

Governor’s Executive Order Number N-10-19 calls for the development of a Water Resilience Portfolio to guide the Administration’s water policy. A draft of the Portfolio was released in January. The release of the final Portfolio had been delayed due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

**COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

**Delta Marketing:**

Through an interagency agreement, staff have been working with the Delta Protection Commission (Commission) to implement elements of the Five-Year Delta Marketing Plan and the Delta Sign Plan, which was a recommendation in the Marketing Plan. Together, Conservancy and Commission staff submitted 11 encroachment permit applications to Caltrans for “Welcome to the Delta” signs throughout the Delta. Unfortunately, the encroachment permits have been denied. Staff met with representatives from Assemblymember Grayson’s office to discuss ways that the Legislature might support the plan and help staff get the signs posted. Conservancy staff and Assemblymember Grayson’s office continue to coordinate with Caltrans.

The Delta Marketing Plan also recommended creation of a Delta recreation map and in November the Commission printed 6,500 maps. A distribution plan has been developed and staff is reaching out to contacts on the distribution list, but many are still closed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

**BOARD DIRECTIVES TO STAFF**

1. Board Member Sandoval requested that the link to the EcoRestore 5-year fact sheet be distributed to the Board members when it is available.
  - *The link to the document was sent on June 24, 2020*
2. Board Member Provenza requested an overview and update on Conservancy Delta Carbon management efforts.
  - *An overview and update presentation will be presented as Item 10 on the agenda for this meeting.*
3. Board members requested a status update on the application for the Pacific Flyway Center Proposition 68 grant.
  - *The Conservancy has received and is currently reviewing a concept proposal for the Pacific Flyway Center*
4. Board members discussed the possibility of touring the Dutch Slough project currently in the implementation phase.
  - *Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions, a sight visit is not possible at this time. We will resume site visits as soon as possible once it is safe to do so.*

**DELTA CONSERVANCY BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE UPDATE**

(Attachment 3)

**CONTACT**

Campbell Ingram, Executive Officer  
Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy  
[campbell.ingram@deltaconservancy.ca.gov](mailto:campbell.ingram@deltaconservancy.ca.gov)  
(916) 375-2089