



Executive Officer's Report
March 23, 2022

PROGRAM UPDATE

STAFFING UPDATE

Please welcome Chelsea Martinez, our new Grant and Contract Analyst. Chelsea started with the Conservancy on March 7, 2022. She will focus on the Conservancy's grant and contract administration. Chelsea comes to us from the Yolo Basin Foundation in Davis, where she was the non-profit's Deputy Director.

Please welcome Trevor Fox, our new Environmental Scientist. Trevor started with the Conservancy on March 2, 2022. His work will focus on implementation and management of Proposition 1 projects and participation in ecological studies related to the Conservancy's mission. Trevor comes to us from Arizona State University where he studied climate change-related impacts on insect populations for his PhD in biology.

Sadly, we must say goodbye to Chelle Temple-King. Chelle, an Environmental Scientist and the lead for our Proposition 1 Grant Program, was with the Conservancy for over a year and has accepted a promotion to a Senior Environmental Scientist position with the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Chelle did an excellent job managing the Proposition 1 Program and she will be missed.

COVID-19 UPDATE

All Conservancy staff continue to work from home. With conditions improving and state and local level directives relaxing we anticipate returning to the office in April with teleworking remaining an option in the Conservancy's operational model. The Conservancy's Telework Policy has been approved by the Department of General Services. We anticipate our May Board meeting will be in person at the Conservancy office in West Sacramento.

FORM 700 COMPLIANCE

A completed Form 700, Statement of Economic Interests, is due by April 1, 2022 for all Board Members, Board Member Alternates, and Liaison Advisors. Forms are completed on the Fair Political Practices Commission online portal. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact Jessica Adel at jessica.adel@deltaconservancy.ca.gov.

JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (JEDI)

The Conservancy's Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee continues to facilitate collaborative learning discussions for all Conservancy staff. Conservancy staff continue to engage other state agencies in discussions about best practices and JEDI outreach.

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM

Nutria Eradication:

Please see the most recent update from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife included in this agenda item (Attachment 2).

DELTA SCIENCE

Fish Friendly Farming:

The Conservancy, supported through a grant from the California State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB), has contracted the California Land Stewardship Institute (CLSI) to implement the Fish Friendly Farming (FFF) Program in the Delta. The FFF Program works with farmers to improve Delta water quality by developing best management practices and identifying needed farm infrastructure updates. The SWRCB approved the FFF Program as an alternative compliance pathway for the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, which is an added benefit for farmers who participate in the program. Though outreach and enrollment were challenging initially, engagement has recently picked up, which is likely a reflection of farmer's increased availability after the end of harvest in November 2021. CLSI worked with the Delta Conservancy Executive Officer and Conservancy Staff to contact The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Municipal Water District (MWD) about signing up their Delta lands in the FFF program. CLSI will continue to work with the Delta Conservancy to advance these potential large enrollments. CLSI drafted articles on the project implementation portion of the grant and the ability to fund practices that improve water quality and water conservation. These practices could help farmers respond to the current drought (contact Rachel Wigginton for copy). The University of California Cooperative Extension, the San Joaquin and Sacramento Water Quality Coalitions, Sacramento and San Joaquin Agricultural Commissioners and the Farm Bureaus of Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Yolo counties distributed the fliers to members through emails, newsletters, and websites, and in paper form at their offices. In response to the flier, Tirupathi Farms signed up three farms totaling 782 acres. This brings total acres enrolled to 1,482 acres. CLSI is currently discussing enrollment with farmers across an additional 2,500 acres.

Delta Aquatic Resource Inventory:

The Conservancy, supported by a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), has contracted the Aquatic Science Center (ASC) to develop a [Delta Aquatic Resource Inventory](#) (DARI). The DARI project is developing a comprehensive resource inventory specifically formulated with the Delta's unique ecology in mind. The final DARI Workgroup meeting took place on March 2, 2022, which covered how Workgroup feedback was integrated into the final dataset and presented findings from a pilot study using the Riparian Zone Estimator Tool (RipZET) to map riparian habitats in the Delta. The DARI dataset has been integrated into the California Aquatic Resources Inventory (CARI) and into the EcoAtlas online interface (view [here](#)) to be made publicly available via EcoAtlas by the end of March 2022, when these agreements will close. EcoAtlas users can now explore an accurate map of the different aquatic resources of whole Bay-Delta and San Francisco Estuary. The DARI dataset establishes a baseline condition to compare against as habitats are restored and management strategies are improved.

Delta Bird Returns:

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), along with Point Blue Conservation Science, Audubon California, and the Delta Conservancy, worked to establish a reverse auction framework, based on TNC's successful [Bird Returns](#) program. The [Delta Farmlands Bird Returns](#) program provides cash incentives for landowners to flood their fields to increase the ecological value of the Delta to migratory birds,

especially during times of drought. One thousand one hundred and forty-eight acres of post-harvest or fallow rice and corn fields were enrolled in the Delta Farmlands Bird Returns program at a cost of \$146,900. Bids from all five growers who submitted bids were accepted, but one farm did not meet minimum qualifications due to crops still standing in the fields. The enrolled acres are creating valuable, shallow water habitat between February 15, 2022 and March 27, 2022. Lessons learned during the initial year of implementation will be incorporated into next year's bid solicitation and analysis process.

Delta Science Coordination:

Conservancy staff continue to work collaboratively with the broader Delta science community to advance ecological restoration, invasive species management, and regional science coordination in the Delta and Suisun Marsh.

Conservancy staff continue to coordinate with colleagues at the Delta Stewardship Council (Council) regarding regional restoration planning and a role for public participation in this process. The draft Delta Plan Chapter 4 Ecosystem Amendment includes a recommendation to create a restoration sub-committee of the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC). Initially, the sub-committee will be staffed by the Conservancy and the Council. The first meeting of the new DPIIC restoration sub-committee took place on January 31, 2022. The first meeting summarized the role of the sub-committee and included a group activity to develop the sub-committee's vision and goals. Conservancy and Council staff incorporated this feedback to draft a vision and goals document, collaborated with a work group of sub-committee members to edit the vision and goals, and will present the draft vision and goals to the whole sub-committee in the second meeting set for March 14, 2022.

Staff continue to facilitate the Delta Interagency Invasive Species Coordination (DIISC) Team. The most recent DIISC Team quarterly meeting took place on February 8, 2022. The meeting included a briefing on the California Invasive Species Advisory Committee's recent reconvening and the work the DIISC Team has been leading on early detection and rapid response to invasion. As part of the agency round robin, the Team received an update on ribbon weed (*Vallisneria australis*), a recently identified invasive aquatic plant. This is the first known invasion by this plant in North America.

BOARD DIRECTIVES TO STAFF

1. Forward the Delta Drought Response Pilot Program solicitation to all the County Supervisors on the Board.
 - o Solicitation notice forwarded on January 26, 2022.
2. Provide and update on Delta carbon management activity.
 - o An update on the Conservancy Delta Carbon Program will be added to the May Board meeting agenda.
3. Invite Grantees to share presentations on ongoing and completed projects.
 - o Staff are working with grantees to provide presentations and site visits in the near future.

DELTA CONSERVANCY BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE UPDATE

Agenda Item 5 (3): Budget and Expenditure Report

CORRESPONDENCE

None

CONTACT

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