



EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

March 24, 2021

PROGRAM UPDATE

COVID-19 UPDATE

All Conservancy staff continue to work from home with the expectation that this will continue until vaccines are widely distributed. Staff have done an excellent job adapting to the new reality and continue to be very productive with only minor disruptions in workflow. Staff has begun planning for returning to the office and conducted a survey of employee preferences regarding telecommuting and shared office space. State guidance on return to work policy is anticipated to be available soon and will inform the Conservancy's return to work policy.

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. We have covered topics such as racial and gender equity and disability access and inclusion. Staff have begun background research for developing a framework for advancing the Conservancy's long-term JEDI goals and continue to have discussions with the Delta Stewardship Council and the Delta Protection Commission regarding the potential development of a single JEDI framework for the three agencies.

DELTA CONSERVANCY STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

The Conservancy updates its Strategic Plan every five years, the most recent update covering the years 2017 to 2022. Staff are beginning the process of updating the plan for 2022 to 2026. The vision is to conduct this update in-house over the course of this calendar year, with Board consideration of a final draft in January 2022. An overview of the process and timeline for the revision will be presented under Agenda Item 11.

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM

Nutria Eradication:

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

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. Commission staff are now working to re-file applications for the 11 encroachment permits for the "Welcome to the Delta" signs proposed in the Delta Sign Plan and are working with the California Prison Industry Authority to fabricate the signs.

Due to funding expirations and project delays, some related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the scope and budget of the agreement has been shifted, and the Commission will now conduct and fund installation of the signs outside of the agreement with the Conservancy.

DELTA SCIENCE

Fish Friendly Farming:

The Conservancy, supported by funding 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. 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. A technical advisory committee has been formed to provide input on the best management practices and plans for farm infrastructure improvements. CLSI held an informational webinar on March 11, 2021 and will hold another on March 25, 2021.

Delta Aquatic Resource Inventory:

The Conservancy, supported by funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 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. After initial consultation with a working group of experts, ASC spent much of 2020 and early 2021 applying the standard procedures developed by the working group to delineate the different aquatic resources in a geospatial dataset. This spring, ASC will host virtual workshops to solicit feedback on the dataset from the working group and begin the process of incorporating this feedback into a finalized dataset that will be incorporated into the EcoAtlas online interface.

Delta Science Coordination:

Conservancy staff continue to work collaboratively with the broader Delta science community to advance science in the region. On February 9, 2021, staff facilitated the quarterly meeting of the Delta Interagency Invasive Species Coordination (DIISC) Team where CDFW briefed the participants on its new invasive species reporting tool, the EDDMapS mobile application. Conservancy staff also coordinated working group meetings of DIISC Team members focused on early detection and rapid response to invasion in the Delta. Staff and co-authors from CDFW and the California Department of Water Resources will present the initial outcomes of these working group meetings in a poster at the Bay-Delta Science Conference in April. Invasion by Mute Swans was flagged as a concern by the Board, and staff have included them in the list of species of concern in the early detection and rapid response work. Additionally, Mute Swans are part of CDFW's targeted outreach for invasive species reporting (<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Invasives/Species/Mute-Swan>). Staff worked in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy, UC Merced, SFEI, and Point Blue Conservation Science to submit an ambitious proposal to the Delta Stewardship Council's (Council) 2021 Delta Science funding call. If funded, this work would focus on the economic incentives and barriers to a large-scale shift of land use that would result in a more sustainable, nature-friendly, carbon-neutral agricultural landscape in the Bay Delta.

At the November 18, 2020 Program and Policy Subcommittee meeting, staff discussed the initial results of research and analysis to understand if and how land conversion from row crops to woody perennial crops impacts terrestrial habitat value for wildlife, particularly birds. This work was incorporated into this broader project and will provide critical inputs into the economic models being led by economists from The Nature Conservancy. Staff continue to coordinate with the Council regarding restoration in the Delta and the role the Delta Restoration Network formerly played in the systems. A coordination meeting between Conservancy staff and Council staff is scheduled for March 17, 2021 to continue discussing how the functions previously offered by the Delta Restoration Network can be integrated into the systems supporting the new restoration goals in the Delta Plan Chapter 4 update.

FORM 700 COMPLIANCE

A completed Statement of Economic Interest, Form 700, is due by April 1, 2021 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.

BOARD DIRECTIVES TO STAFF

- 1) Board members requested a presentation on the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) program be included at a future board meeting.
 - Staff will provide a JEDI presentation at the May 2021 meeting.
- 2) Board members requested staff add to the Proposition 1 Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality Grant Program Cycle 5 Grant Guidelines a link to a map and list of the projects funded.
 - A link to the Delta Conservancy web page that includes a list and a map of funded Proposition 1 projects has been included in the Cycle 5 Grant Guidelines.
- 3) Board members requested the Proposition 1 Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality Grant Program Update include more detail in the new information section.
 - The Staff Report has been revised to include more detail.

DELTA CONSERVANCY BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE UPDATE

Agenda Item 5 (Attachment 3): Budget and Expenditure Report

CORRESPONDENCE

The Conservancy received communication from the Knightsen Town Community Services District (KTCSO) regarding the Knightsen Wetland Restoration and Flood Protection Planning Project (Prop 1-1709) in which the KTCSO raised concerns about the timeline for public engagement by the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy (the Grantee). The public engagement has been delayed by several factors: the COVID-19 global pandemic, wildfire impacts, and the execution of a grant agreement amendment to fund the public engagement. The Grantee subsequently responded to the KTCSO's communication with updated project timelines and public engagement schedules.

CONTACT

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