



**Executive Officer's Report  
October 27, 2021**

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**PROGRAM UPDATE**

**STAFFING UPDATE**

Sadly, we must say goodbye to Robyn Krock, the Conservancy's Community Projects Supervisor and Proposition 68 Grant Program Lead. Robyn has accepted a position with California State Parks where she will manage the Park Impact Partner Program within their Partnerships Division. Robyn led the development of the Proposition 68 program which has now funded two great projects, with three more to be considered for approval under Agenda Items eight through ten. Her contributions to the program and the Conservancy will be lasting and she will be missed. Robyn's last day will be November 5. Staff are actively working to backfill current vacancies as soon as possible.

**COVID-19 UPDATE**

All Conservancy staff continue to work from home; however, planning is in process for a phased approach to resuming in-office operations. As state-level direction is issued and local health directives evolve, the Conservancy will adapt accordingly. Once work in the office can resume, teleworking will remain an option in the Conservancy's operational model.

**JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (JEDI)**

The Conservancy's Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee is identifying actions that can be taken in the near-term while work continues to comprehensively shape the Conservancy's JEDI engagement. The JEDI Committee anticipates an agendaized JEDI update at the January 2022 Board meeting. The JEDI Committee continues to facilitate collaborative learning discussions for all Conservancy staff. Recent topics include performative actions and diversity in conservation. Conservancy staff continue to engage other state agencies in discussions about best practices and JEDI outreach.

**DELTA CONSERVANCY STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE**

The Conservancy staff continue to develop the 2022 to 2027 Strategic Plan. At the July 2021 meeting staff presented draft guiding principles, goals, objectives, and example metrics for feedback. A draft of the Strategic Plan for public comment is presented under agenda item 12. If approved, the document will be posted on the Conservancy's website for a 30-day public comment period. Staff will consider all comments and present a final draft for Board consideration in January 2022.

**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 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. The CLSI has been working with the five Delta counties' Farm Bureaus to set up many small in-person meetings to discuss program enrollment. The first 700 acres of farmland began the process of enrollment in the program over the summer. Conservancy staff are working to amend the contract with CLSI to clarify existing tasks and extend the term of the agreement through 2024 in response to COVID-19 impacts. This amendment does not change the budget of the project.

### **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 ASC hosted virtual workshops to solicit feedback on the dataset from the technical working group. This feedback will be incorporated into the finalized dataset that will be integrated into the EcoAtlas online interface by early 2022.

### **Delta Bird Returns:**

Staff are working with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Point Blue Conservation Science, and Audubon California to establish a reverse auction framework, based on TNC's successful [Bird Returns](#) program. This program would provide cash incentives for landowners to flood their fields to increase the ecological value of the Delta to migratory birds, especially during times of drought. Staff are developing outreach materials and best management practices in hopes of beginning flooding in December 2021.

### **Conservancy Funding for Special Projects:**

On July 6, 2021, Conservancy staff and collaborators from the Aquatic Science Center-San Francisco Estuary Institute (ASC-SFEI) responded to the request for applications to the EPA Wetland Program Development Grants. The proposal is titled California Wetland Program Plan, Wetland Monitoring Workgroup Strategic Plan, and Strategic Capacity Development for the Regional Approach to Wetland Protection. If funded, the project would update California's Wetland Program Plan, a key strategic document used to direct EPA funding in the state. The total budget for this work is \$643,428.00, with \$482,571.00 coming from the federal government and a 25% match from SFEI-ASC (\$130,8570), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (\$4,000), and the Delta Conservancy (\$26,000 in-kind staff hours). This project budget exceeds the Executive Officers delegated authority and will need action by the Board to accept the funds, should they be awarded. Grant awards are expected to be announced by the end of October 2021.

### **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 also continue to coordinate with colleagues at the Delta Stewardship Council (Council) regarding regional restoration planning and a role for public participation in the restoration planning process. The draft Delta Plan Chapter 4 Ecosystem Amendment will include a recommendation to create a restoration sub-committee (sub-committee) of the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC). The Conservancy Executive Officer and Jeff Henderson, Deputy Executive Officer for Planning and Performance at the Council, will present a proposed structure and charge for the sub-committee.

Staff continue to facilitate the Delta Interagency Invasive Species Coordination (DIISC) Team. The most recent DIISC Team quarterly meeting took place on June 15, 2021. Staff have been leading a group of DIISC Team members in planning the 2021 Delta Invasive Species Symposium. The planning team includes members from the Conservancy, the Delta Stewardship Council, the Department of Water Resources, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Wildlife Conservation Board. The Symposium is a nexus for Delta managers, researchers, and decision-makers to meet; share and synthesize information; and communicate best practices and lessons learned. The virtual event will take place December 15, 2021 and will focus on Early Detection and Rapid Response to new invasions in the Delta. Registration is now open and can be accessed via Zoom at [this link](#) or at the [Symposium website](#), where the agenda and other details will be posted in advance of the Symposium.

Conservancy staff have been participating in the development of the 2022-2026 Science Action Agenda (SAA) update. The SAA lays out the high-level science goals and actions for a five-year period. Conservancy staff participated in a July workshop to provide input on proposed science actions and provided feedback on the draft science actions circulated by Council staff after the workshop.

#### **BOARD DIRECTIVES TO STAFF**

- 1) Board members requested that staff provide an update on the status of the grant agreement at the Restoration Planning at River Garden Farms Project, due to the sale of the land which the project is located on.
  - Staff will provide an update in Agenda Item Six (Proposition 1 Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality Grant Program Update).

#### **DELTA CONSERVANCY BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE UPDATE**

Agenda Item 5 (3): Budget and Expenditure Report

#### **CORRESPONDENCE**

None

#### **CONTACT**

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