



Executive Officer's Report
January 26, 2022

PROGRAM UPDATE

STAFFING UPDATE

Please welcome Hope Miller, our new Communications Analyst. Hope started with the Conservancy on November 15, 2022. She will focus on the Conservancy's outreach, communications, accessibility, and information technology needs. Hope comes to us from the NBC affiliate in Sacramento, where she was the station's Senior Digital Editor.

Martha Ozonoff has graciously agreed to serve as the acting Community Projects Supervisor during recruitment to fill that vacancy.

After more than 30 years in state service, Debra Kustic, the Conservancy's Deputy Executive Officer, has decided to retire. Debra has been with the Conservancy since 2016 and in that time has overseen all aspects of the Conservancy's operations and helped advance the organization in its leadership of ecosystem restoration and economic development in the Delta region. Debra will step down in late March. It is hard to imagine this organization without Debra and we will miss her tremendously. Please join us in wishing her a long and happy retirement.

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. The Conservancy has developed a Telework Policy that is currently under review by the Department of General Services.

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.

ETHICS COURSE COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

Most Board Members and Liaison Advisors completed the State Officials Ethics Course by December 31, 2021 and submitted the certificate to our Board Liaison. If Board members are still in the process of completing this, we ask that they finish and submit the certificate at their earliest convenience.

MEDIA MENTIONS

The Knightsen Wetland Restoration and Flood Protection Project (Project ID P1-1709) was the subject of a [December 26, 2021 article in The Press](#), a newspaper that covers East Contra Costa County. The article details how the project will benefit a variety of species, improve stormwater drainage for the area, and improve the quality of water draining into the Delta. A spokesperson for the Knightsen Town Community Services District said some farmers are concerned that an increased presence of threatened/endangered wildlife species could interfere with farming operations. Brentwood Mayor Joel Bryant is quoted supporting the project.

Maven's Notebook provided a summary of a recent presentation to the Delta Stewardship Council regarding carbon capture and storage activities in the Delta and potential implications for the Stewardship Council in their oversight role. Campbell Ingram provided an introduction to the topic and a summary of recent activity. ([January 5, 2022 article in Maven's Notebook](#)).

JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (JEDI)

The Conservancy's Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee continues to identify actions that can be taken in the near-term while work continues to comprehensively shape the Conservancy's JEDI engagement. The 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.

DELTA CONSERVANCY STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

At its October 27, 2021 meeting, the Board approved a draft of the 2022 to 2027 Delta Conservancy Strategic Plan for public review. No comments were received during the public comment period. Staff will present a final draft for consideration under Agenda Item 11.

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. 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 during the summer. Conservancy staff submitted an amended contract with CLSI for control agency approval and anticipate the amendment will be finalized and approved in February 2022. This amendment will 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 developed an online editing tool and hosted a virtual workshop to solicit final feedback on the dataset from the technical working group in October 2021. This feedback has been incorporated and the final dataset is being used in a pilot study to determine the feasibility of generating a riparian area map for the Delta. The DARI dataset will be integrated into the California Aquatic Resources Inventory (CARI) and into the EcoAtlas online interface to be made publicly available in early 2022.

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. The program received seven bids that proposed flooding more than 3,000 acres for enhanced bird habitat. Bids were analyzed using factors such as total flooded acreage, duration of flooding, and adjacent landscape characteristics. Due to the very wet beginning of the water year and the resulting field conditions, some farmers who put in bids are having difficulty preparing fields to meet the minimum standards of the program (e.g., percentage of field harvested to short stalks). A summary of the final bid selections will be included in the Executive Officer's Report for the March 2022 Board meeting. Lessons learned during the initial year of implementation will be incorporated into next year's bid solicitation and analysis process.

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 United States Environmental Protection Agency Wetland Program Development Grants. The proposal was titled California Wetland Program Plan, Wetland Monitoring Workgroup Strategic Plan, and Strategic Capacity Development for the Regional Approach to Wetland Protection. Unfortunately, this project was not selected during the competitive review 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 the restoration planning 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). The first meeting of the new DPIIC restoration sub-committee is scheduled for January 31, 2022.

Staff continue to facilitate the Delta Interagency Invasive Species Coordination (DIISC) Team. The most recent DIISC Team quarterly meeting took place on November 16, 2021. Staff led a group of DIISC Team members in planning the 2021 Delta Invasive Species Symposium that took place on December 15, 2021. For the last eight years, the biennial Delta Invasive Species Symposium has been a nexus for Delta managers, researchers, and decision-makers to meet, share and synthesize information, and communicate best practices and lessons learned. This year's symposium focused on early detection and rapid response to new invasions in the Delta. More details about recent DIISC Team activities are described in Agenda Item 9.

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. A draft of the 2022-2026 SAA is available for public comment until January 21, 2022. Staff will review the draft SAA and provide comments as needed.

BOARD DIRECTIVES TO STAFF

- 1) Send out invitations to the December 15, 2021 Delta Invasive Species Symposium
 - Invitation sent to Board members and Liaison Advisors on October 27, 2021

DELTA CONSERVANCY BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE UPDATE

Agenda Item 5 (3): Budget and Expenditure Report

CORRESPONDENCE

None

CONTACT

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