



Executive Officer's Report

July 23, 2025

PROGRAM UPDATE

STAFFING UPDATE

Sarah Lesmeister, Ecological and Community Programs Manager, has accepted a new position with the California Water Commission as their Deputy Executive Officer. Her last day with the Conservancy was July 11. Recruitment to backfill the Ecological and Community Programs Manager position will be posted on CalCareers shortly. Chelesa Martinez, Grant, Contract, & Board Liaison, started maternity leave on July 16.

ETHICS TRAINING COMPLIANCE

Thanks to those who have completed the ethics training course for the 2025-2026 period. California law requires state officials to complete an ethics training course within six months of being hired, and if service is ongoing, once during each two-year period. The two-year period begins with an odd-numbered year. Board Members and Liaison Advisors were sent email requests to provide a certificate of completion for the 2025 ethics course.

CLIMATE BOND SOLICITATION (PROPOSITION 4)

Status Update

Staff have completed the Conservancy's Climate Bond grant solicitation notice and proposal application materials and are waiting to open the solicitation pending final approval of allocations and a decision from the Legislature regarding the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) exemption. The Administrative Procedures Act sets the requirements for adoption, publication, review, and implementation of regulations by State agencies and affects all departments managing Proposition 4 grants. Prior natural resource agency bonds (e.g. Propositions 68, 84, 50) included language that exempted bonds from the APA, meaning that the development of program guidelines did not need to undergo the formal regulation process through the Office of Administrative Law. A decision on this exemption is expected in August.

Overview

If the APA exemption is approved by the Legislature, staff plan to release the grant solicitation in August. Each program, Nature Based Solutions, Ecosystem Restoration and Climate Adaptation, and Community Enhancement, will receive approximately \$8.6 million. Staff expect to run two solicitations for each program, \$5 million per program in 2025–2026 and \$3.6 million per program in 2026–2027.

Each solicitation will include two rounds of review:

1. **Pre-application:** This initial step will help staff identify projects that are ineligible, not ready, or not competitive. It will be a pass/fail process.
2. **Full application:** Projects that pass the pre-application stage will be invited to submit a full proposal. These proposals will be reviewed and scored competitively based on the following criteria: project readiness, scientific or community value, community support, geographic balance, cost share, service to disadvantaged or vulnerable communities, partnerships, tribal involvement, cost-effectiveness, alignment with state and Delta goals, long-term maintenance and sustainability, and likelihood a planning project leads to implementation.

Conservancy staff anticipate bringing initial recommendations for funding starting in May 2026.

Small Grant Program

In addition, staff anticipate launching a small grant program for awards up to \$100,000. This program is intended to support smaller organizations by building their capacity and providing technical assistance. Funds can be used for various purposes, including staffing, technical support, equipment, and research.

DELTA CONSERVANCY FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 BUDGET APPROPRIATION UPDATES

A verbal update will be provided about the Governor Budget and trailer bills in progress.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

The Workforce Analyst Report, Energy Emergency Alert Action Plan, and updates on the State Leadership Accountability Act (SLAA) Report were all submitted as scheduled. Fiscal staff performed a variety of year-end activities. The Conservancy's Records Retention Schedule was submitted to the Secretary of State's Archives Division for their review and approval. During this period, staff processed one grant amendment, closed one contract, and processed a total of 20 invoices.

DELTA CONSERVANCY ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING AUTHORITY AND REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ) UPDATE

The regulation for Architectural and Engineering (A&E) Authority was approved by the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) and the final record was issued with the Secretary of State (SOS) on July 10. This authority allows more flexibility in contracting given the limited number of entities that can perform the specialized work needed in the Delta.

Conservancy staff evaluated the received Statement of Qualifications for the Cost Feasibility Analysis for the Restoration of Franks Tract project and are in the negotiation process with the most qualified firm. The contract award will be considered by the Board during Agenda Item 9.

GRANT APPLICATIONS

Clean Vessel Act Program

Conservancy staff are working on a grant proposal for the 2026 California State Park's Division of Boating and Waterways Clean Vessel Act Education and Outreach Grant Program. The \$280,000 annual grant includes education and outreach to boaters about proper sewage disposal and monitoring of pumpout and dump stations in the in the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary and Santa Cruz and Monterey counties. Proposals are due August 11. See Agenda Item 11 for an update on the 2025 program.

Marine Debris Removal Program

Conservancy staff partnered with the California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways, the Delta Protection Commission, Solano Resource Conservation District, the Catholic Charities of Stockton, and law enforcement agencies from the five Delta counties to submit a proposal to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Marine Debris Removal Program in January 2025. If awarded, the program would provide funding to support community engagement, education, outreach, removal, monitoring, and prevention of marine debris (e.g., abandoned vessels, vehicles, fishing gear) in the Delta waterways. Staff expect to hear a decision about the status program and the proposal by early fall 2025.

DELTA SCIENCE

Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC) Restoration Subcommittee (RSC):

Conservancy staff continue to co-lead the DPIIC RSC with colleagues from the Delta Stewardship Council (Council). The vision of the DPIIC Restoration Subcommittee is a Delta ecosystem that supports the mosaic of natural and human communities, is resilient to stressors, adapts to change, and is accessible for recreation. The Restoration Subcommittee will meet on August 7 to discuss initiatives currently underway that further this vision. First, Conservation Farms and Ranches and The Nature Conservancy will describe how implementing a mosaic of rice and wetlands in the Delta can help create a more resilient landscape. Then, the Subcommittee will hear presentations on the Webb Tract Wetland Restoration Project, which has been funded by the Delta Conservancy's Nature Based Solutions Grant funding. Metropolitan Water District of Southern California will speak about the overall progress of the project, HydroFocus will present on carbon sequestration research, and faculty from California State University-Chico will explain how the project is incorporating ecocultural perspectives. Finally, Point Blue Conservation Science will present on their research to estimate the potential benefits of tidal wetland restoration for the Delta's bird community. The meeting will also include a recap of the third Delta Restoration Forum held in May. The Restoration Subcommittee's work is guided by its [workplan](#).

Delta Interagency Invasive Species Coordination (DIISC) Team

The Delta Interagency Invasive Species Coordination (DIISC) Team, facilitated by Conservancy staff and co-led by staff from the Delta Stewardship Council, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the California Department of Water Resources, will have its third quarterly meeting of the year on August 20. Planning for the sixth biennial Delta Invasive Species Symposium is being led by an interagency planning team facilitated by Conservancy staff, which includes staff from the Delta Stewardship Council, the Department of Water Resources, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the office of the Solano County Agricultural Commissioner. The 2025 Symposium theme is

“Modeling and Managing Invasive Species for Tomorrow's Delta.” Understanding how invasive species will respond to and impact future ecological conditions is a key need for Delta stewards and managers. The Symposium will broadly address anticipating and responding to future conditions through presentations highlighting modeling, forecasting, using novel tools, changing economic resources, and approaches for dealing with uncertainties. The Symposium will take place at the California Natural Resources Agency building in Sacramento on December 4. The event will be held in person with a virtual attendance option.

Delta Carbon Team

A newly formed Delta Carbon Team, facilitated by Conservancy staff and co-led by staff from The Nature Conservancy, had its second meeting June 24. This team aims to bring people working on Delta carbon issues together to improve collaboration and make progress at scale toward reversing subsidence and reducing associated greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining economic viability and improving climate resilience for Delta lands. The team identified priority and long-term actions and assignments and has formed sub-teams that will begin working on specific tasks. The team will now meet quarterly to discuss progress and share resources.

OUTREACH**Summer Fest in Oakley**

Staff participated in Oakley's Summer Fest on June 28 in coordination with the Delta Stewardship Council. As a registered event participant, staff provided information on the Climate Bond, Conservancy projects and activities, and were on hand to talk with community members. The event featured dozens of vendors, live entertainment, food trucks, and kid-friendly activities.

Just Transitions Public Workshop

Staff attended a June 9 public workshop for the Just Transitions in the Delta project. The purpose of the workshop was to have people take part in developing and assessing future scenarios that envision a more resilient Delta. The Just Transitions Project, which is led by UC Davis in collaboration with UC Berkeley, UC San Diego, and UC Merced, is exploring adaptive strategies to pressing challenges in the Delta, including sea level rise, drought, and salinity management.

2025 State of the Estuary Conference

Staff submitted two abstracts for consideration at the 2025 State of the Estuary Conference, which is scheduled for October 28-29 at the Oakland Scottish Rite in Oakland, California. Anjali Shakya and Maya Garrett co-authored the proposed poster presentation, “Delta Conservancy Proposition 4 Grant Program.” With support from the staff of the DPIIC RSC, an organized oral session titled “Implementing Permitting Tools to Advance Ecological Restoration in the Bay-Delta Estuary” was proposed by Campbell Ingram, Jill Sunahara (Environmental Science Associates), Meghan Hertel (California Natural Resources Agency), Abby Fateman (East Contra Costa Habitat Conservancy), Cori Gray (California Department of Fish and Wildlife), and Roger Levenfall (Marin County Public Works).

MEDIA MENTIONS

- [The Daily Republic wrote an article](#) about work underway on the Walk in the Marsh project at the Pacific Flyway Center in Solano County. The Conservancy is providing \$1.9 million to build three miles of ADA-accessible trails in the Suisun Marsh.
- [Maven's Notebook published a story](#) about Metropolitan Water District of Southern California partnering with ecocultural experts on the Webb Tract wetland restoration project in Contra Costa County.
- [The Delta Protection Commission produced an article](#) on rice cultivation becoming more common in the Delta. In the article, the Conservancy explains how Nature Based Solutions projects will benefit both the Delta's economy and ecosystems by helping farmers with rice conversion, reducing subsidence, providing wildlife habitat, and improving long-term economic viability of Delta islands.

BOARD DIRECTIVES TO STAFF

- None

DELTA CONSERVANCY BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE UPDATE

Agenda Item 6.2: Budget and Expenditure Report

CORRESPONDENCE

- None

CONTACT

Campbell Ingram, Executive Officer
Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy
campbell.ingram@deltaconservancy.ca.gov
(916) 621-8246