



Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is the Delta?**

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, formed by the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, is the largest estuary on the West Coast. The Delta, along with the Suisun Marsh, is a regional, state, and national treasure that is home to more than 515,000 people and 750 animal and plant species; supplies drinking water to 25 million Californians and irrigation water for the majority of California's agricultural industry; and attracts 12 million recreational visitors annually.

2. **What is a levee?**

A levee is a man-made bank of earth constructed to keep a river from overflowing its banks or to prevent ocean waves from washing into undesired areas. In the Delta, the levees continually constrain river flows and tidal action to provide protection from flooding.

3. **Why does the Delta need levees?**

Early settlers built an intricate levee system in the Delta wetlands to create dry "islands" suitable for farming. Today, these levees protect land assets, including residential and commercial structures, agricultural land, gas and water supply pipelines, roads, bridges, railroads, and animal habitats. They also protect water assets, including fresh water flows, salinity management, aquatic habitat and migration corridors, and shipping channels.

4. **What threatens the Delta levees?**

The Delta levees are vulnerable to damage caused by floods, wave action, seepage, subsidence, earthquakes, sea-level rise, and some human and wildlife activities.

5. **Who is responsible for the levees?**

Federal, State, regional, and local agencies each have a role in planning, overseeing, and implementing levee maintenance and improvements.

6. **Who benefits from the levees?**

The levees provide protection and benefits to residents, landowners, and businesses on the islands; owners and users of energy and transportation infrastructure (private companies, the State, and local government); water supply agencies and their customers; and the public (recreation and the environment).

7. **What would happen if the Delta levees fail?**

A catastrophic levee failure could cause injury to people or loss of life. It could also damage property, highways, energy utilities, water supply systems, and the Delta ecosystem, all of which could harm the regional and statewide economy and environment.



8. What can be done to reduce risks in the Delta?

A variety of actions can reduce the risks in the Delta, such as upgrading the current levees, building and improving channels that redirect flood waters, elevating houses to protect against floods, and improving emergency response preparation.

9. What is the Delta Stewardship Council doing?

The **Delta Reform Act of 2009** called on the Delta Stewardship Council to lead a multi-agency effort to establish priorities for State investments in the Delta levee system. The Council is collaborating with State agencies, local reclamation districts, Delta landowners, and many other involved stakeholders to prepare a Delta Levees Investment Strategy.

10. What is the Delta Levees Investment Strategy?

The Delta Levees Investment Strategy is an extensive, inclusive stakeholder research project that will identify State funding priorities and provide direction to assemble them into a comprehensive investment strategy for the Delta levees—based on the best available data, research, local knowledge, and lessons learned from other State and local programs and planning efforts.

11. Why is an investment strategy needed?

Since the 1970s, the State has committed more than \$700 million to operate, maintain, and improve Delta levees and reduce risks in the Delta. However, the State does not have a long-term strategy to guide future investments, and funding is limited.

12. How is this different from past projects?

The Delta Levees Investment Strategy will build on previous levee planning work and provide a **long-term** strategy for future State investments based on current conditions, information, and technologies. This strategy will use a **comprehensive** methodology that considers the Delta levee assets, threats and consequences, types of beneficiaries, costs, stakeholder input, and various risk-reduction measures.

13. How is the Delta Levees Investment Strategy funded?

The funding for the Delta Levees Investment Strategy is provided by Proposition 1E bond funds (2006).

14. How will future risk-reduction measures be funded?

Future funding for levee improvements and other risk-reduction strategies would likely come from a mix of sources, including the State and the landowners, businesses, and water users who benefit from the levees. The Delta Levees Investment Strategy will consider how costs should be allocated to the various beneficiaries.

15. What are the expected project outcomes?

This project will result in a report that outlines a suite of investments that best address the State's many goals and priorities. The strategy will recommend risk reduction actions for each island, tiered priorities for State investment, and a method for allocating costs to beneficiaries. Study results will include a computer-based tool that can be used in the future for investment planning as new information becomes available. The strategy will be submitted to the California



Legislature. The Delta Stewardship Council will use these results to update its regulations and recommendations that guide risk reduction in the Delta.

16. What is the project schedule?

The project began in July 2014 and is ongoing. The Delta Levees Investment Strategy will be developed over the following 18 to 24 months.

17. How can the public get involved?

The Council is committed to a robust, open process to develop the Delta Levees Investment Strategy. The project team will be meeting with the people and organizations working on levee issues and the Delta to obtain information and understand their priorities. The Delta Levees Investment Strategy's website (<http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/delta-levee-investment-strategy>) also provides updated project news, information, and ways to get involved.