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MEMORANDUM

Date: August 18, 2016

To: Council Members and
Jessica Pearson, Executive Officer

From: Jessica Davenport, Program Manager, and
Daniel Huang, Environmental Scientist

Subject: Habitat Restoration Issue Paper – Two Years Later

This memo provides the second annual update on progress made in the focus areas identified by the habitat restoration issue paper, *Restoring Habitat with Science and Society in Mind*[1], which the Council endorsed in August 2014. It also includes information about recent headway made in implementing restoration projects and provides a preview of upcoming efforts that will continue to advance the integration of best available science and adaptive management in habitat restoration planning and implementation in a manner that considers local stakeholder concerns.

Focus Areas Identified in the Habitat Restoration Issue Paper

The habitat restoration issue paper identified 10 areas of focus to advance habitat restoration over the following two years, including six actions to be undertaken by Council staff and four actions to be achieved by other agencies and stakeholders. These areas of focus are listed below:

Council Staff Actions

1. Continue to provide early consultation on habitat restoration projects that are covered actions under the Delta Plan in order to advise project proponents on using best available science and adaptive management and avoiding or reducing conflicts with existing uses, where feasible.
2. Report on habitat performance measures by December 2014 and again in December 2015.

[1] The paper is available online at http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/docs/14-0923-restoring-habitat-science-and-society-mind-issue-paper.

3. Work with others to complete at least one of the landscape-scale conceptual models and associated landscape habitat metrics for the priority habitat restoration areas.
4. Convene scientific experts to provide independent review of restoration project designs and adaptive management plans within a landscape context.
5. Provide science support to the Fishery Agency Strategy Team (FAST) and Suisun Marsh Plan's Adaptive Management Advisory Team (AMAT) in coordinating regulatory and scientific input on project design and adaptive management plans.
6. Engage Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee members in discussions of challenges and potential solutions related to land acquisition and permit coordination.

Actions of Other Agencies and Stakeholders

7. Complete the expansion of EcoAtlas to the Delta.
8. Complete the IEP[2] Tidal Wetland Monitoring Protocols and include them in the adaptive management plans for FRP[3] projects.
9. Apply Agricultural and Land Stewardship Strategies, as appropriate, to habitat restoration projects.
10. Address top three Delta community stakeholder concerns regarding land acquisition and management, as discussed above.

Attachment 1, *Progress after Two Years in the 10 Areas of Focus Identified in the 2014 Habitat Restoration Issue Paper,* summarizes progress in each of these focus areas.

Progress on Implementation of Restoration Projects

Thanks in large part to the efforts of the Governor's California EcoRestore initiative (which did not exist when the habitat restoration issue paper was drafted), significant progress has been made in implementing restoration projects, primarily by accelerating permitting. At the same time, as the Tule Red example below illustrates, the Council has played an important role in ensuring that these projects are based on the best available science and have sound adaptive management plans. This was accomplished by taking steps identified in the habitat restoration issue paper, as described below.

[2] IEP stands for the Interagency Ecological Program which is a science consortium with nine member agencies that provides ecological information and scientific leadership for management of the San Francisco estuary.

[3] FRP stands for Fish Restoration Program which is an effort jointly implemented by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to construct tidal wetland restoration projects pursuant to the 8,000 acre restoration requirement of the 2008 Delta Smelt biological opinion.

Participation in California EcoRestore Initiative
Council staff has participated in the California EcoRestore initiative, launched in April 2015 in response to the decision not to pursue completion of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan as a Natural Community Conservation Plan. One of the main goals of EcoRestore is to accelerate implementation of habitat restoration projects across the Delta and Suisun Marsh, some of which have been in planning for decades. EcoRestore has been instrumental in helping to secure permits for various habitat restoration and fish passage projects; three projects have been constructed since 2015 and several more are expected to begin construction this year or next (see Attachment 2, *Progress of Habitat Restoration and Fish Passage Projects in the Past Two Years*). In addition, the Yolo Bypass floodplain habitat restoration, a key project of EcoRestore, is being developed in a manner that minimizes impacts on regional agricultural sustainability (e.g., making sure increased inundation of the Bypass does not interfere with rice planting in late spring). Although permitting and long-term funding for operations and maintenance remain formidable challenges, EcoRestore has been invaluable in helping projects move towards implementation.

Tule Red Example
The Tule Red habitat restoration project exemplifies progress made in several areas of focus identified in the habitat restoration issue paper. Located in the Suisun Marsh along Grizzly Bay, the Tule Red project is being implemented by the State and Federal Contractors Water Agency (SFCWA) and will restore 420 acres of existing managed brackish wetlands to tidal habitat. This project cleared the Delta Plan covered action process without appeal in June 2016 and is expected to break ground later this year, pending permits.

Early Consultation. Council staff engaged in multiple early consultation meetings and discussions with SFCWA consultants on the Tule Red project (**Focus Area #1**) starting in 2015. Adaptive management staff from the Council's Delta Science Program met with SFCWA consultants to specifically address the project's adaptive management plan and explain the regulatory requirements of Delta Plan Policy G P1[4].

Coordinated Monitoring and Adaptive Management Planning. During early consultation, science program staff strongly encouraged SFCWA consultants to develop the Tule Red adaptive management plan considering the latest draft guidance from the IEP Tidal Wetlands Monitoring Project Work Team (**Focus Area #8**). Ultimately, the monitoring and adaptive management plan for the Tule Red project submitted for the Delta Plan certification of consistency was developed based on this draft guidance, with additional assistance from CDFW.

Interagency Coordination. The habitat issue paper called for Council staff to provide science support to two different interagency teams (**Focus Area #5**), the AMAT and the FAST. The AMAT convened in June 2015 to discuss the Tule Red project. Council planning staff co-

[4] Delta Plan Policy G P1 (23 California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 5002) requires that all covered actions must document use of best available science and that ecosystem restoration and water management covered actions must include an adaptive management plan with documentation of access to adequate resources for implementation of adaptive management.

chaired the AMAT and science program staff also participated in this meeting to provide scientific support to the AMAT.

The FAST is comprised of representatives from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Bureau of Reclamation, CDFW, and the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS). The FAST reviews projects being implemented pursuant to the latest State Water Project/Central Valley Project biological opinions (BOs)[5] and determines acreage credits. In spring 2016, Council planning and science staff participated in a joint meeting with FAST to provide scientific and technical review regarding the Tule Red project.

Example of a Major Challenge: **Improving Habitats Along Delta Levees**

Currently most restoration planning and projects in the Delta and Suisun Marsh focus on restoring and enhancing floodplain and tidal wetland habitat. This focus is similarly reflected in the Delta Plan via the Priority Habitat Restoration Areas (PHRAs) which are focused on areas that are at the appropriate elevation for floodplain and tidal wetland restoration. There has been less of a focus regarding developing planning guidance and conceptual models for restoring channel margin and riparian habitat along the Delta's waterways.

Council staff—through review of monitoring reports and interviews with a wide variety of experts—prepared a report, *Improving Habitat Along Delta Levees*[5], which was endorsed by the Council in January 2016. The report summarizes the best available scientific information about integrating habitat restoration into Delta levee improvement projects in order to benefit native fish and birds. It also provides several recommendations, including repeating the Delta Plan's call for landscape-scale restoration planning. This type of planning would provide critical guidance regarding where to focus channel margin and riparian habitat projects.

Recognizing the importance of assessing effectiveness of levee habitat restoration efforts, but noting that reclamation districts generally do not have the capacity to do post-construction biological monitoring, the report also includes a recommendation to measure wildlife response through a standardized regional monitoring program for levee habitat projects. This program-level approach would be analogous to the monitoring program being developed by the IEP Work Team for restored tidal wetlands (i.e., see **Focus Area #8**).

What's Next: Adaptive Management, Conservation Framework, Delta Plan Amendment

As priorities for habitat restoration planning and science support have evolved over the past two years, Council staff has responded to those changes and seized opportunities to work with partners on exciting new efforts. Looking forward, there are major initiatives already underway that once completed will help push forward implementation of habitat restoration that is science-based, maximizes regional ecological potential, and minimizes conflicts with neighboring landowners and existing uses.

[5] These include the 2008 USFWS BO, which included a requirement to restore 8,000 acres of tidal habitat, and the 2009 NMFS BO which calls for restoration of 17,000-20,000 acres of floodplain habitat.
[5] The report is available online at http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/docs/improving-habitats-along-delta-levees-issue-paper

EcoRestore's Adaptive Management Program

Work has begun to develop an EcoRestore Adaptive Management Program, starting with a white paper outlining the essential components of the program. The California Natural Resources Agency asked the Council's Science Program to lead a technical interagency/stakeholder group, the Interagency Adaptive Management Integration Team (IAMIT), and tasked the group with developing the technical components of the adaptive management white paper. By the end of 2016, IAMIT will provide the white paper to the EcoRestore Adaptive Management Steering Committee, which will add governance and financing components to the paper. The Steering Committee, composed of representatives of several State agencies, will consult with local and federal agencies and stakeholders to determine how the adaptive management program will be structured and will seek the resources needed to implement the program.

CDFW's Delta Conservation Framework

CDFW recently announced an effort to work with other agencies and stakeholders to develop by 2017 the Delta Conservation Framework, a 25-year plan for the Delta, Suisun Marsh, and Yolo Bypass. This framework is intended to serve as the continuation of EcoRestore beyond 2020 (see Attachment 3, *Delta Conservation Framework Flyer*). Additionally, the Delta Conservation Framework will serve as high level guidance for the development of more focused regional restoration strategies that will involve extensive local participation, such as the Cache Slough Complex planning process convened by the Delta Conservancy. Finally, the Delta Conservation Framework will help inform the upcoming amendment to the ecosystem elements of the Delta Plan. In the coming months, Council staff will seek input on the scope of this proposed Delta Plan amendment and expects to commence work in early 2017.

Conclusion

The habitat issue paper endorsed by the Council continues to provide a solid template for guiding near-term efforts in planning and implementing habitat restoration projects in a way that considers local interests, such as flood protection and agricultural sustainability. As the Council's focus shifts to scoping the proposed ecosystem-related amendment to the Delta Plan, that process will provide even more opportunities to consider how the Council and partner agencies can continue to work with local interests to make progress in promoting efficient and effective habitat restoration in the Delta and Suisun Marsh.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1: Progress after Two Years in the 10 Areas of Focus Identified in the 2014 Habitat Restoration Issue Paper

Attachment 2: Progress of Habitat Restoration and Fish Passage Projects in the Past Two Years

Attachment 3: Delta Conservation Framework Flyer

Progress after Two Years in the 10 Areas of Focus Identified the 2014 Habitat Restoration Issue Paper

Focus Area	Area of Focus	Council Staff Actions	Actions of Other Agencies and Stakeholders
1	Continue to provide early consultation on habitat restoration projects that are covered actions under the Delta Plan in order to advise project proponents on using best available science and adaptive management and avoiding or reducing conflicts with existing uses, where feasible.	Staff provided early consultation on 11 habitat restoration projects: • Dutch Slough • Prospect Island • Lower Putah Creek • Tule Red • Goat Island Marsh and Lower Spring Branch Creek • Honker Bay Conservation Bank • Southport Setback Levee • Decker Island • Twitchell Island North End • Twitchell Island Levee Improvement • Yolo Bypass	Agencies that have engaged in early consultation include: • Department of Water Resources (DWR) • California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) • State and Federal Contractors Water Agency • Solano County • West Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (WSAFCA) • Reclamation District 1601
2	Report on habitat performance measures by December 2014 and again in December 2015.	Staff reported to the Council on performance measures in December 2014 and August 2015. In February 2016, the Council approved a Delta Plan amendment to refine performance measures, including habitat and landscape ecology metrics. Performance measure reporting is included in the Council's annual reports.	The San Francisco Estuary Partnership worked with California Water Quality Monitoring Council's California Estuary Monitoring Workgroup and others to develop ecological indicators to include in the 2015 *State of the Estuary Report*. In addition, many experts, including agency staff and stakeholders, contributed to the refinement of the Delta Plan performance measures.

Focus Area	Area of Focus	Council Staff Actions	Actions of Other Agencies and Stakeholders
3	Work with others to complete at least one of the landscape- scale conceptual models and associated landscape habitat metrics for the priority habitat restoration areas (PHRAs).	This area of focus has evolved based on the recognition that landscape-scale conceptual models for specific geographic locations, such as PHRAs, must include local input in order to build support for implementation of restoration projects in the region. Council Science Program staff has therefore supported the Delta Conservancy in working with Solano County, Solano County Water Agency, Reclamation District 2068, Yolo County, California Natural Resources Agency, the San Francisco Estuary Institute, and Flow West, LLC, to develop a proposal for a regional restoration strategy for the Cache Slough Complex PHRA.	The San Francisco Estuary Institute is developing a handbook of science-based restoration strategies, building on their previous reports on historical ecology (2012) and landscape-scale habitat metrics (2014). The reports were funded by CDFW and the interagency Ecosystem Restoration Program. In June 2016, the Delta Conservancy approved funding for the first phase of planning to support development of the Cache Slough Regional Restoration Strategy. The goal of the project is to identify strategic actions to maximize the effectiveness of habitat restoration while addressing local community needs, such as flood protection and agricultural sustainability.
4	Convene scientific experts to provide independent review of restoration project designs and adaptive management plans within a landscape context.	The Council's Science Program is leading the development of a white paper to provide the technical basis for the creation of the EcoRestore Adaptive Management Program. This program will include convening scientific experts to provide independent advice and/or review of restoration project designs and adaptive management plans within a landscape context.	Not applicable.

Focus Area	Area of Focus	Council Staff Actions	Actions of Other Agencies and Stakeholders
5	Provide science support to the Fishery Agency Strategy Team (FAST) and Suisun Marsh Plan's Adaptive Management Advisory Team (AMAT) in coordinating regulatory and scientific input on project design and adaptive management plans.	Council planning and science program staff participated in a joint session with FAST to review the Tule Red project. FAST and Council staff will continue coordination and engagement on future restoration projects. Council planning staff chairs and science program staff participates in meetings of the AMAT.	Not applicable.
6	Engage Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC) members in discussions of challenges and potential solutions related to land acquisition and permit coordination.	Council staff participates in DWR's Land Use Subcommittee, which has invited a series of speakers to provide information about land acquisition issues, such as mineral rights, mitigation banks, and Williamson Act contracts. Council staff participates in permit coordination discussion at EcoRestore meetings.	DWR made progress in resolving land acquisition challenges, as demonstrated by acquisition of land on Prospect Island, Decker Island, and Bradmoor Island in 2015. DWR is developing a process to contract with landowners to provide habitat restoration credits for the Fish Restoration Program. EcoRestore is helping to accelerate permitting for priority habitat restoration projects.
7	Complete the expansion of EcoAtlas to the Delta.	Not applicable.	San Francisco Estuary Institute, in partnership with the Delta Conservancy, Central Valley Joint Venture and San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, launched the Delta project tracking component of EcoAtlas in October 2015. A modern Delta habitat types layer has been added, as well.

Focus Area	Area of Focus	Council Staff Actions	Actions of Other Agencies and Stakeholders
8	Complete the Interagency Ecological Program (IEP) Tidal Wetland Monitoring Protocols and include them in the adaptive management plans for Fish Restoration Program (FRP) projects.	Planning and science staff participate in the IEP Tidal Wetland Monitoring Project Work Team developing the monitoring protocols.	The IEP Project Work Team completed conceptual models of tidal wetland ecological function and submitted them for publication as an IEP Technical Report. CDFW FRP monitoring staff began pilot testing of monitoring gear for fish and invertebrates in 2015. The monitoring framework, including detailed sampling protocols, is largely completed and is expected to be in final draft form by the end of 2016. Tidal wetland restoration projects will include these monitoring protocols in adaptive management plans, as appropriate, consistent with site- specific project objectives. For example, the Tule Red project's adaptive management plan was based on the draft IEP Tidal Wetland Monitoring framework.
9	Apply Agricultural and Land Stewardship Strategies, as appropriate, to habitat restoration projects.	Staff informed project managers about the Agricultural and Land Stewardship (ALS) Strategies, as appropriate, during early consultation.	In designing the Yolo Bypass Salmonid Habitat Restoration and Fish Passage Project, local interests have developed an alternative that identifies specific agricultural protections and proposes ways for project components to work better for agricultural interests. DWR is helping to further develop this alternative so that it can be fully analyzed in the project's environmental impact report. In addition, DWR has included the elements of the ALS Planning approach in the draft Conservation Strategy for the 2017 Central Valley Flood Protection Plan.

Focus Area	Area of Focus	Council Staff Actions	Actions of Other Agencies and Stakeholders
10	Address top three Delta community stakeholder concerns regarding land acquisition and management, as discussed in the Habitat Restoration Issue Paper: 1. An inventory of public lands and lands purchased using public funds for habitat restoration. 2. A map of overlapping habitat areas associated with FRP, Bay Delta Conservation Plan, county habitat conservation plan and natural community conservation plans, levee mitigation and enhancement, and the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan Conservation Strategy. 3. Good neighbor policies, including funding for long-term operations and maintenance of habitat lands to avoid adverse effects on neighbors.	Not applicable.	1. The Land Management Working Group (LMWG) facilitated by the Delta Conservancy reviewed and discussed DWR's inventory of public lands and lands purchased using public funds for habitat restoration. In addition, under the Conservancy's leadership, the LMWG and the Delta Dialogues group shifted from long-term planning related to the Bay Delta Conservation Plan to near-term planning to provide the regional context for projects that can be funded by the Conservancy's Proposition 1 grant program. 2. The proposed map of overlapping habitat areas has not been prepared. 3. In October 2014, the DWR-led ALS Workgroup completed a Good Neighbor Checklist that references the ALS Strategies. The issue of funding for long-term operations and maintenance has not been resolved.

Progress of Delta Habitat Restoration and Fish Passage Projects in Past Two Years

California EcoRestore

Since its launch in April 2015, the California EcoRestore Program has worked to accelerate implementation of habitat restoration and fish passage projects throughout the Delta and Suisun Marsh. Since August 2014, three EcoRestore Program projects have been constructed, including:

Lindsey Slough Restoration Project – This project finished construction in October 2014 and reestablished tidal flows to historic marsh habitat in the Calhoun Cut Ecological Reserve, owned by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The project is located in the Cache Slough Complex, one of the Delta Plan's priority habitat restoration areas (PHRAs).

Knights Landing Outfall Gate Fish Barrier Project – This project is located north of the Delta on the Sacramento River and prevents adult salmon from straying into the Colusa Basin Drain, where they would not be able to access suitable upstream spawning habitat. This project started construction in late August 2015 and was completed in November 2015.

Sherman Island Whale's Mouth Wetland Restoration Project – This project was constructed in 2015 by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and restored 600 acres of freshwater wetlands on Sherman Island. The project provides multiple benefits including subsidence reversal and carbon sequestration as well as habitat for migratory waterfowl. In 2014 this project was the first covered action to be certified consistent with the Delta Plan.

Additionally, the following EcoRestore Program habitat restoration or fish passage improvement projects are expected to begin construction by 2017:

Wallace Weir Modification Project – located north of the Delta in the Yolo Bypass, this project will prevent adult Chinook salmon from straying into the Colusa Basin Drain and include a fish rescue facility to return adult salmon back into the Sacramento River system. The project is being implemented through a partnership between DWR and Reclamation District 108. This project is expected to commence construction in Fall 2016.

Tule Red Restoration Project - located in the Suisun Marsh along Grizzly Bay, this project by the State and Federal Contractors Water Agency will restore 420 acres of existing managed brackish wetlands to tidal habitat. This project cleared the Delta Plan covered action process without appeal in June 2016 and is expected to break ground later this year, pending permits.

McCormack-Williamson Tract Project – located in the Cosumnes River-Mokelumne River Confluence Priority Habitat Restoration Area (PHRA), this project will restore nearly 1500 acres to seasonal floodplain, riparian, tidal and subtidal habitat. The Nature Conservancy and DWR are jointly working on this project. Construction work is tentatively set to begin in 2016 to improve the McCormack-Williamson Tract levees in preparation for reintroduction of tidal action in 2017 or 2018.

Dutch Slough Tidal Marsh Restoration Project – located in the Delta Plan's West Delta PHRA, this DWR project will restore approximately 560 acres of tidal marsh habitat, 100 acres of upland habitat, and 250 acres of open water habitat across three parcels. Dutch Slough cleared the Council's Delta Plan consistency process without appeal in January 2015. The project is expected to start construction on the first of three parcels in 2017.

Hill Slough Tidal Marsh Restoration Project – located in CDFW's Hill Slough Wildlife Area, this project will restore 750 acres of tidal marsh habitat and upland habitat and 200 acres of enhanced managed wildlife habitat in Suisun Marsh. The scope of this project will include the raising of a county road to mitigate for increased flood risk associated with restoring the area to tidal action. This road construction work is currently scheduled to begin Fall 2016 with breaching of levees to reintroduce tidal flows to the area to occur in 2017 or 2018.

Twitchell Island San Joaquin River Setback Levee and Channel Margin Habitat Project – this project will stabilize nearly five miles of threatened levee along the San Joaquin River and will also include waterside habitat improvements to benefit native wildlife like riparian birds. DWR and Reclamation District 1601 are jointly working on implementing this project which will be constructed in multiple phases over the course of a decade. Reclamation District 1601 submitted a certification of consistency with the Delta Plan in July 2016. The first phase of the project is tentatively targeted for 2017, pending permits and funding for the remaining 15 percent of the cost for this phase.

Proposition 1 Grant Programs

Proposition 1, approved in November 2014, included funding designated to benefit the Delta. In 2015, CDFW and the Delta Conservancy established new grant programs to administer this Proposition 1 funding that will support multi-benefit ecosystem projects in the Delta.

Delta Conservancy

Proposition 1 identified $50 million for the Delta Conservancy to fund multi-benefit ecosystem and watershed protection projects, which the Conservancy will disseminate through its Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality Grant Program. In May 2016, the Delta Conservancy Board approved, conditionally approved, or reserved $5.9 million in grant funding for eight habitat enhancement or restoration projects located throughout the Delta. These projects include:

Paradise Cut Conservation and Flood Management Plan – this effort will fund the San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District (RCD) to advance planning for a new flood bypass along the San Joaquin River near Paradise Cut. The work will help develop conceptual plans and a project description for advancing a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act analysis as well as quantifying costs and benefits.

Paradise Cut Flood and Conservation Easement Acquisition – this grant will fund the San Joaquin County RCD to acquire flood and conservation easements within the proposed area for a new San Joaquin River flood bypass near Paradise Cut. Acquisition of the flood easements will be necessary to build the bypass.

Three Creeks Parkway Restoration Project - this project led by American Rivers will restore native riparian vegetation and floodplain habitat along nearly a mile of Marsh Creek. The creek drains to the Delta at Dutch Slough.

Lower Marsh and Sand Creek Watershed Riparian Restoration Planning – this effort will help facilitate riparian restoration within the Marsh Creek and Sand Creek watersheds, which are urban watersheds located in Contra Costa County. This grant will provide funding to the non-profit American Rivers to develop a programmatic CEQA document that will help facilitate permitting of future multi-benefit creek restoration projects.

Sherman Island Wetland Restoration Project, Phase III – this project led by Ducks Unlimited will help contribute towards restoration of 1,600 of non-tidal emergent wetlands on Sherman Island. The grant will specifically fund a topographic survey to help develop conceptual engineering designs for the future wetland, as well as a wetland delineation, which is necessary for permit applications and environmental documentation.

Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Habitat and Drainage Improvement Project – this grant will help fund Ducks Unlimited to improve drainage and water infrastructure in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area in order to create new wetlands and improve management of existing wetlands and agricultural lands.

Yolo Bypass Corridors for Flood Escape on the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area – this project led by the Yolo Resource Conservation District will create habitat within the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area to provide habitat for wildlife to escape flood waters

Habitat Enhancement for Swainson's Hawk at Elliott Ranch – this grant will enable the Environmental Defense Fund to fund the enhancement of 300 acres of a 1,000-acre farm in Yolo County, leading to improved habitat for Swainson's hawk.

Conservancy staff expects to release approximately $9 million in funding for projects during the upcoming 2016/2017 funding cycle.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

In order to administer its Proposition 1 funds, CDFW established the Delta Water Quality and Ecosystem Restoration Grant Program to fund projects that focus on water quality, ecosystem, restoration and fish protection facilities that benefit the Delta. In January 2016, CDFW selected 10 projects for funding, including three projects that will restore habitat in the Delta. These projects include:

Rush Ranch Lower Spring Branch Creek and Suisun Hill Hollow Tidal Connections Project – this project will fund the Solano Land Trust to implement habitat restoration projects on its Rush Ranch property in Suisun Marsh. The project will help improve tidal flow connections to Spring Branch Creek and Suisun Hill (Solano Land Trust) and will include planting of native vegetation along the creeks.

Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Habitat and Drainage Improvement Project – the grant from CDFW will help fund support permitting of this project. (Note that the Delta Conservancy is funding the construction and implementation aspects of this project).

Knightsen Wetland Restoration and Flood Protection Project – this project led by the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy is a multi-objective effort to provide local flood protection, improve recreation and public access, and restore a mosaic of wetlands. The grant will help fund planning activities related to land acquisition and site specific studies to inform future project design.

DELTA CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is inviting agencies and stakeholders to help develop a high level 25-year Delta Conservation Framework for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, Yolo Bypass, and Suisun Marsh by 2017. The Delta Conservation Framework will serve as the continuation of California EcoRestore.

THE FRAMEWORK WILL:

- Guide regional-scale planning, permitting, and grant making in support of implementing conservation programs and projects in the Delta, Suisun, and Yolo Bypass
- Lay out a path for integrating stakeholder concerns into regional conservation strategies
- Inform the amendment of ecosystem elements of the Delta Plan

JOIN US AND PARTICIPATE!

Please engage in a series of three consecutive community workshops in the coming months that will provide the opportunity for interested stakeholders to vet concepts and work products as they are developed to inform the Delta Conservation Framework document.

DELTA CONSERVATION

The implementation of strategies and related actions for the protection, enhancement, restoration, and adaptive management of Delta ecosystems and their ecological functions, processes, and human uses.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

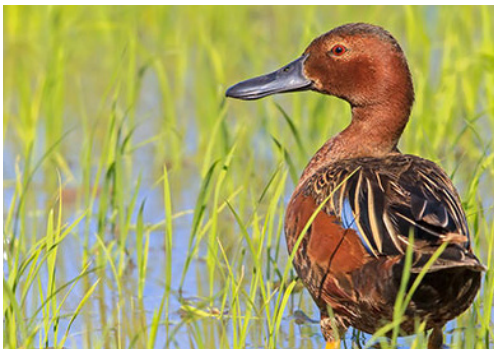
Implementation goals and objectives of the Delta Conservation Framework are focused on ecosystem function and particular desired conservation outcomes, including:

Biophysical
More natural functional flows, improved water quality, subsidence reversal, carbon sequestration.

Ecological
Communities dominated by native species, special status species recovery, expanding total available habitat and patch size for targeted species and communities, improving connectivity, reestablishing mosaics of complementary habitat types.

Human Wellbeing
Agricultural sustainability, recreation, flood protection

Multi-Benefit Projects:
Projects that promote strategies that combine biophysical, ecological, and human well-being outcomes, such as wildlife-friendly farming



More specifically, the Framework will:

- Identify priorities for grant programs administered by the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy and potentially other agencies;
- Evaluate tradeoffs between efforts to conserve aquatic and terrestrial species;
- Address barriers to conservation project implementation;
- Solicit and integrate feedback from local stakeholders regarding guidance for regional conservation strategies, which are to be developed through current and future initiatives of the Delta Conservancy and other partners;
- Solicit and integrate feedback from local, state and federal agencies to align mitigation and requirements of habitat conservation plans and natural community conservation plans.