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DELTA STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

A California State Agency

September 24, 2014

Ms. Helen Birss
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
1416 Ninth, Suite 1260

Via Email: Helen.Birss@wildlife.ca.gov

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Re: Wetlands Restoration Greenhouse Gas Reduction Grant Program

Dear Ms. Birss:

This letter is response to the notice regarding the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW's) preparation of a Proposal Solicitation Package for the new Wetlands Restoration Greenhouse Gas Reduction Grant Program. Our staff attended the pre-solicitation public workshop on this program held on September 11, 2014. We would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter, and apologize for the lateness of our letter.

As you may know, the Delta Stewardship Council (Council) was created by the California Legislature with a mandate to develop and implement a legally enforceable long-term management plan for the Delta and Suisun Marsh called the Delta Plan. In 2013 the Delta Plan was adopted by the Council and it is intended to coordinate local and state actions to achieve the coequal goals of restoring the Delta ecosystem and increasing water supply reliability for California in a manner that protects and enhances the Delta's unique values.

The Delta Plan contains several legally enforceable policies, as well as recommendations, regarding habitat restoration and carbon sequestration projects in the Delta and Suisun Marsh. Many of these policies and recommendations were developed using the framework of CDFW's Ecosystem Restoration Program's (ERP) Conservation Strategy. Ideally, we would like to see your instructions to proponents interested in implementing project in the Delta or Suisun Marsh include a description of how they intend to achieve consistency with Delta Plan policies. We hope that you will make this preliminary determination of consistency a requirement for receiving grants for wetland restoration in the Delta and Suisun Marsh through your program. If that is not feasible, we hope that you will at least consider including the following issues raised by the policies and recommendations as you develop project proposal evaluation guidelines for the Wetlands Restoration Greenhouse Gas Grant Program.

- **Best Available Science and Adaptive Management.** Delta Plan Policy G P1 (23 CCR Section 5002) states that projects must document the use of best available science. They must have an adaptive management plan that describes the approach to be taken, consistent with the framework in Appendix 1B of the Delta Plan regulations, and must document access to adequate resources and authority for the implementation of the adaptive management plan.
- **Restore Habitats at Appropriate Elevations.** Delta Plan Policy ER P2 (23 CCR Section 5006) states that habitat restoration must be carried out consistent with Appendix 3 of the Delta Plan regulations, which is

"Coequal goals" means the two goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. The coequal goals shall be achieved in a manner that protects and enhances the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place."

excerpted from the 2011 draft CDFW ERP Conservation Strategy. In referencing the ERP Conservation Strategy, this policy seeks to ensure that habitat restoration occurs at appropriate elevations. On a related note, Delta Plan Recommendation **ER R2** calls for prioritizing tidal marsh restoration in areas of the Delta and Suisun Marsh located at or near intertidal elevations, including the Cache Slough Complex, Cosumnes-Mokelumne Confluence, Suisun Marsh, and Western Delta, as well as enhancing floodplain habitat in the Yolo Bypass and the Lower San Joaquin River floodplain. Additionally, for areas of the Delta and Suisun Marsh that are highly subsidized, the ERP Conservation Strategy encourages the implementation of subsidence reversal projects.

- **Avoid Introductions of and Habitat Improvements for Invasive Nonnative Species.** Delta Plan Policy **ER P5** (23 CCR Section 5009) calls for avoiding introductions of and habitat improvements for invasive nonnative species. We recommend that part of the criteria for evaluating proposals to the Wetland Restoration GHG reduction program should assess a project's potential to introduce or improve habitat for nonnative invasive species and their potential effects on native species and proposed measure to avoid or mitigate associated impacts.
- **Respect Local Land Use When Restoring Habitats.** Delta Plan Recommendation **DP P2** states that plans for ecosystem restoration must be sited to avoid or reduce conflicts with existing uses when feasible, considering comments from local agencies and the Delta Protection Commission. Suggested measures to mitigate conflicts with neighboring landowners include the use of buffers.
- **Subsidence Reduction and Reversal.** Delta Plan Recommendation **DP R7** calls for state agencies engaging in subsidence reversal projects in the Delta or State-owned lands to scale-up efforts if these projects are deemed successful. Additionally, it recommends that the Department of Water Resources (DWR) increase the extent of their carbon sequestration and subsidence reversal projects to 5,000 acres by 2017. The Council and the Delta Conservancy are also looking to work with the California Air Resources Board to develop a carbon market in the Delta, so that entities engaging in subsidence reversal projects receive credit for carbon sequestration. We encourage CDFW to develop metrics that capture the full range of benefits provided by subsidence reversal projects, including carbon sequestration, the waterfowl habitat created in the managed wetlands, and reduction of flood risk in the Delta and Suisun Marsh by reducing the strain on levees.

Overall, we are excited about this new program, which promises to help implement multi-benefit projects which integrate greenhouse gas reductions, habitat improvements, flood protection and water supply improvements. If you need clarification regarding our comments, I encourage you to contact Jessica Davenport at jdavenport@deltacouncil.ca.gov or (916) 445-2168.

Sincerely,



Cindy Messer
Deputy Executive Officer

Cc Carl Wilcox, CDFW
Dave Zezulak, CDFW