

JUNE 2026

Agenda Item: 8, Presentation  
Meeting Date: June 25, 2026

# Sherman Island Wetland Restoration Project Phase III (Whale's Nose)



Delta  
Stewardship  
Council

A CALIFORNIA STATE AGENCY

# Overview

- Cutting the Green Tape: overview of the CEQA Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects (SERP)
- Description of the Whale's Nose Project (Sherman Island Phase III)
- Delta Plan and Covered Action Considerations



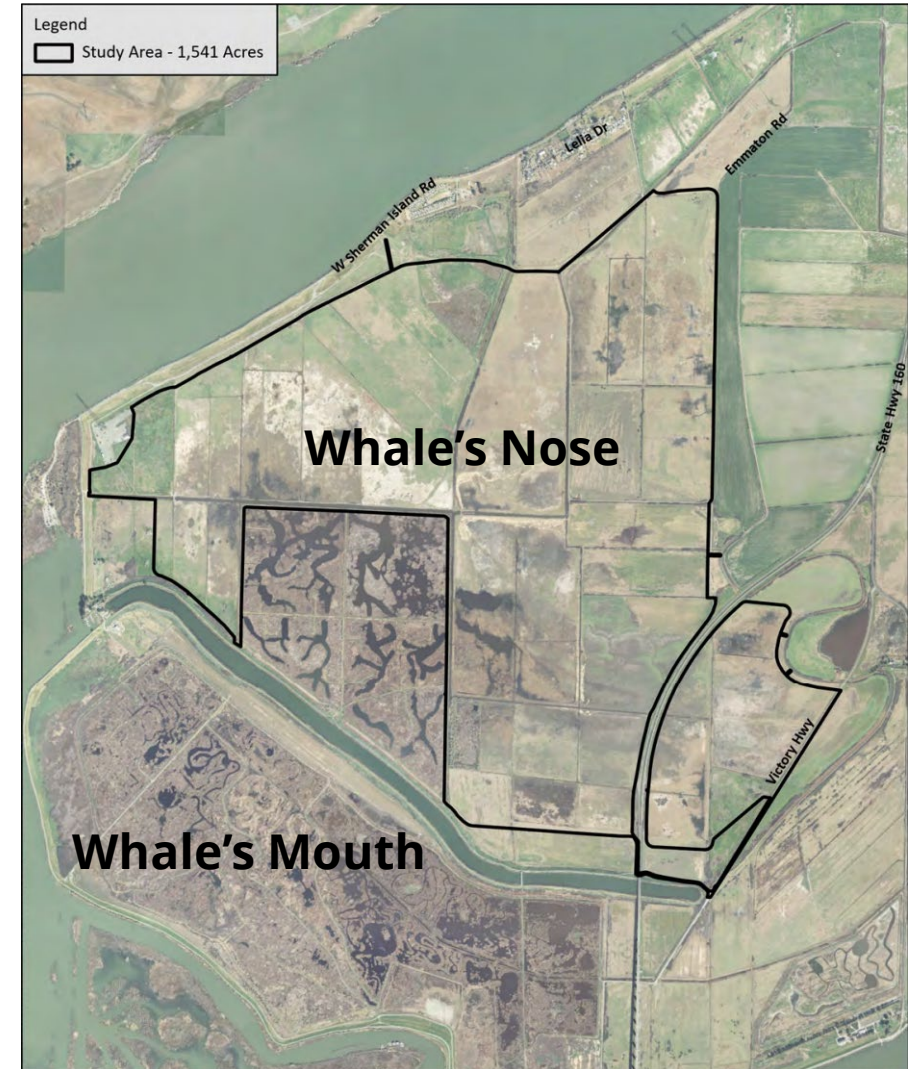
# Cutting the Green Tape



- CEQA Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects (SERP) (Public Resources Code section 21080.56 (a) through (d))
- Administered by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
- Projects must meet specific qualifying criteria for SERP
- Lead agency must determine the project to be exempt from CEQA
- CDFW Director must concur with lead agency determination, based on substantial evidence and best available science

# Phase III Whale's Nose Wetland Restoration Project

- Proposed by RD 341 with assistance from Ducks Unlimited
- RD 341 determined that the Whale's Nose Project meets SERP criteria
- Director of Fish and Wildlife concurred
- RD 341, Ducks Unlimited, and CDFW coordinated with Council staff





# Sherman Island Wetland Restoration Project Phase III

Delta Stewardship Council Presentation  
June 2025

# Project Team

- CEQA Lead Agency:  
Reclamation District 341
- Landowner/Project  
Proponent: Department of  
Water Resources
- Design and Environmental  
Compliance Assistance:  
Ducks Unlimited
- Grant Funder: Sacramento  
San Joaquin Delta  
Conservancy Prop 1 and  
Joseph and Vera Long  
Foundation



Sherman Island  
Reclamation District  
No. 341

&



*...with support from*



*...and funding from*



SACRAMENTO - SAN JOAQUIN  
**DELTA CONSERVANCY**

*A California State Agency*

The  
**JOSEPH & VERA  
LONG**  
Foundation

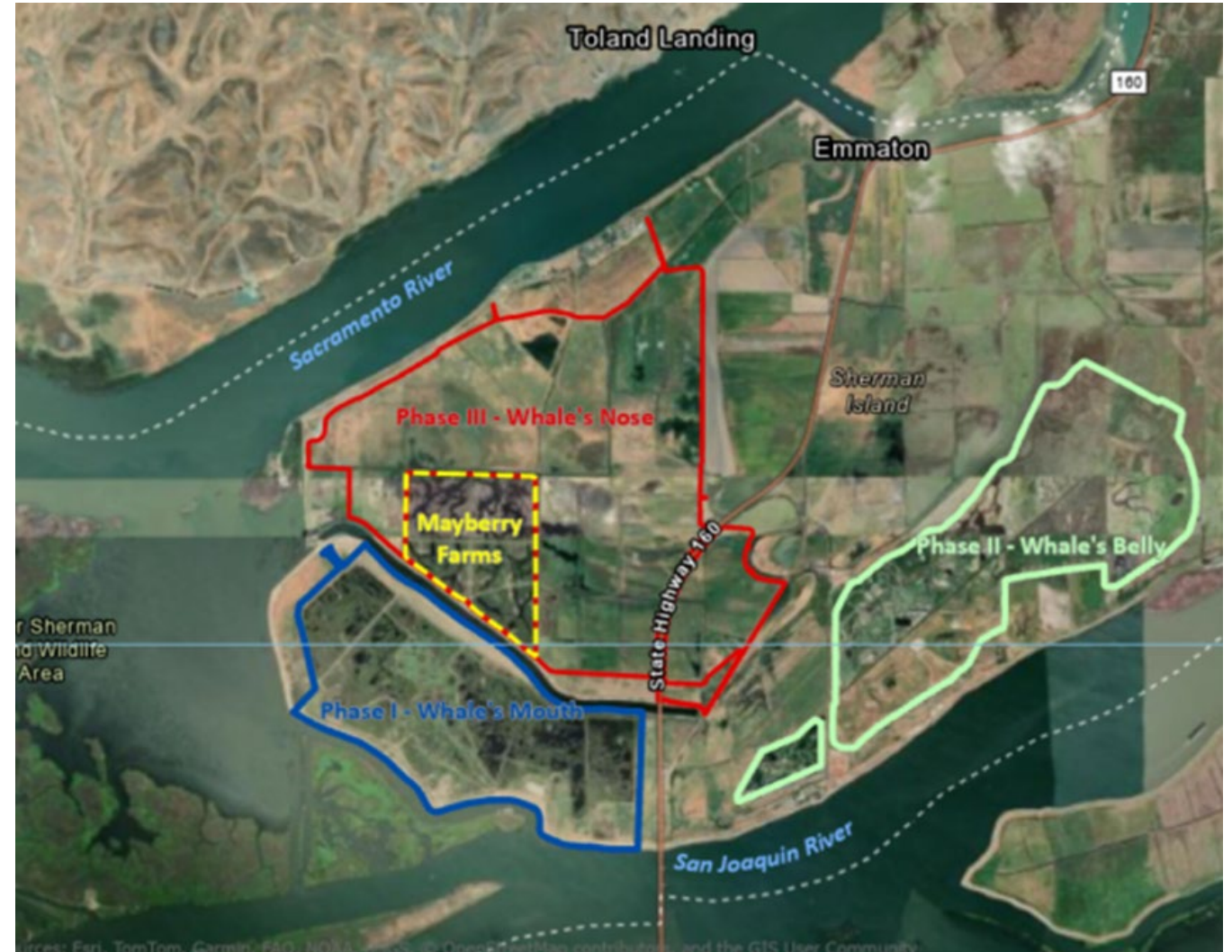
# Sherman Island Wetland Restoration Projects

Mayberry Farms  
(300 acres – 2010)

Sherman Island Wetland  
Restoration Project  
Phase I Whale's Mouth  
(650 acres – 2015)

Phase II Whale's Belly  
(1,000 acres – 2019-2025)

Phase III Whale's Nose  
(1,500 acres – in progress)



# Project Objectives

Habitat restoration

Subsidence reversal

Carbon sequestration

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## Habitat Enhancements

- 1,400 acres of freshwater wetlands
- Inundated year-round (i.e., permanent wetland)
- Topographic variation for both land and aquatic species



Western Pond Turtle (Hazel Rodriguez/USFWS)



Giant Garter Snake (Zarina Sheikh/USGS)



American Wigeon (CDFW)



Tricolored Blackbird (CDFW)

# Subsidence Reversal & Carbon Sequestration

- Project area is subsided 8 to 15 feet below sea level
- Agricultural practices contribute to 2 inches of soil loss per year
- Oxidation of peat soils emits GHGs
- Levee failure could result in saltwater intrusion



# Subsidence Reversal & Carbon Sequestration

- Restored wetlands can accrete peat soils approximately 2 inches per year
- Net GHG emission reduction rate of approximately 8.8 metric tons CO<sub>2</sub>-eq per acre per year or over 12,000 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-eq per year.

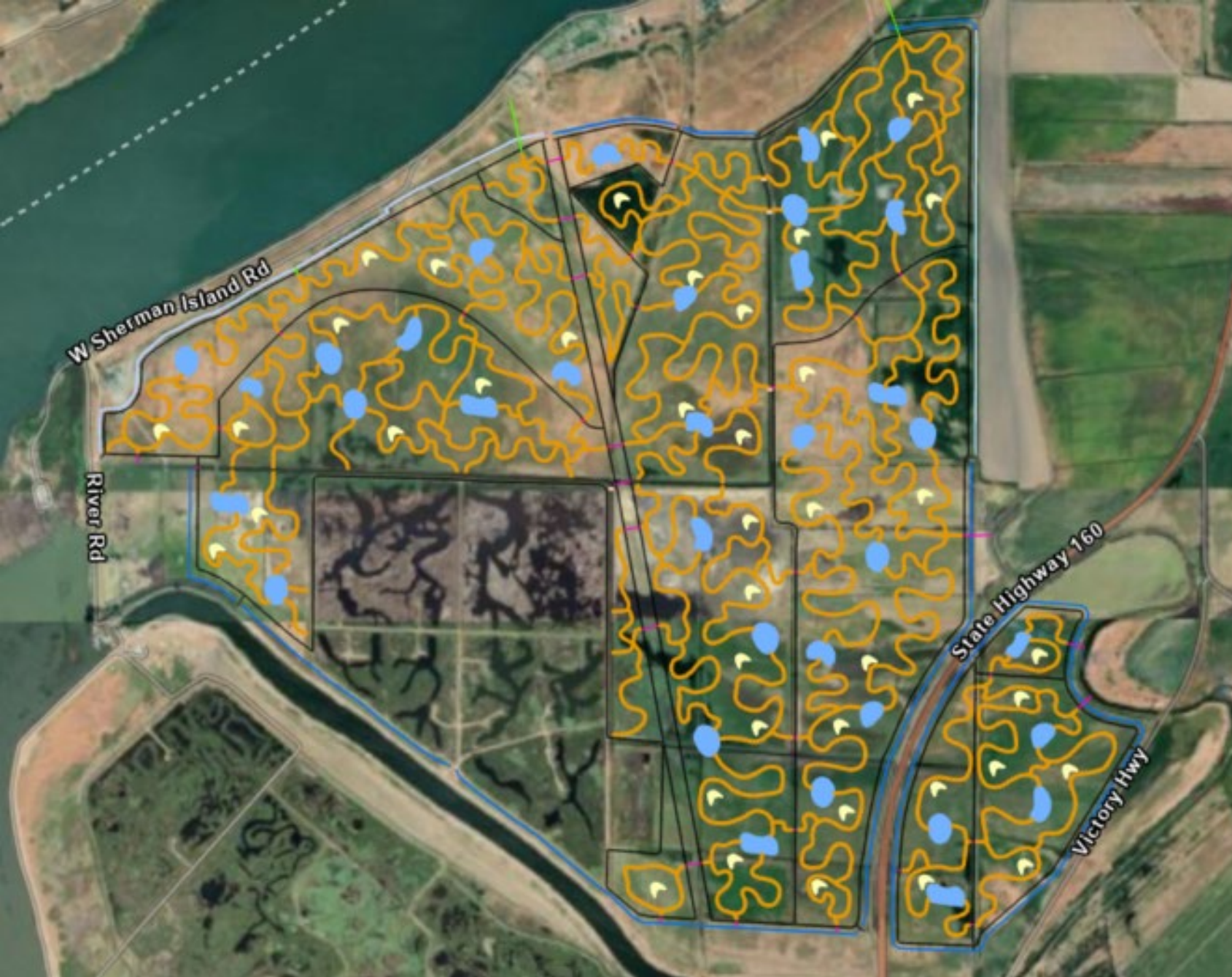


2,600 vehicles  
driven for 1 yr

OR



1,300 home's  
energy use for 1 yr

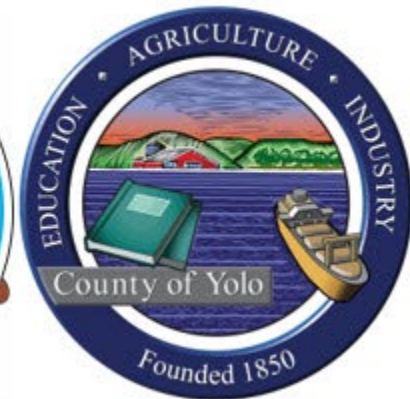


## Design

- Similar to previous efforts on Sherman and Twitchell Island
- Several units to support management and maintenance
- Varying topography supporting habitat diversity and water conveyance

# Project Outreach

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# Project Timeline

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# Delta Plan Considerations

- Supports the coequal goals of providing more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem.
- Wetland restoration projects are also appropriate within subsided islands in the near term

## The Delta Plan

Ensuring a reliable water supply for California, a healthy Delta ecosystem, and a place of enduring value



DELTA STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

# Questions?

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# Thank you!

## Phase III Whale's Nose Wetland Restoration Project

As it pertains to the Council, RD 341

- Completed the “Good Neighbor checklist” for restoration projects identified in Delta Plan Recommendation **ER RB**
- Prepared a Long-term Monitoring and Management Plan that aligns with Delta Plan Adaptive Management Plan Requirements (**GP1(b)(4)**)
- Obtained a letter from the Delta Counties Coalition supporting the Project and use of the SERP

# Delta Plan Considerations

- Projects exempt from CEQA are not covered actions unless there are “unusual circumstances” (23 CCR section 5001(ss)(4)).
- RD 341, in concurrence with Director of Fish and Wildlife, has determined the project qualifies for SERP
- Council staff have reviewed project documentation and consulted with RD 341, Ducks Unlimited and CDFW, including steps taken by RD 341 to demonstrate how the Project aligns with the Delta Plan
- Pursuant to the Council’s regulations, RD 341 has determined that the Project is not a covered action and does not intend to submit a certification of consistency to the Council
- No Council action is needed at this time

# Thank you

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