



# ACTION 2023

Delta Protection Commission

Annual Report



# Letter from the Chair



January 18, 2024

Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor of California  
Honorable Members, California State Legislature  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: 2023 Annual Report of the Delta Protection  
Commission**

Dear Governor Newsom,

Pursuant to the provisions of Public Resources Code Section 29780, I am proud to submit the 2023 Delta Protection Commission Annual Report for your review.

It is our mission to support agriculture, recreation, cultural heritage, and natural resources in the Delta. We advance that mission by implementing our Strategic Plan (Vision 2030) while adapting to challenges and opportunities.

The Commission made great strides in 2023: It developed a management plan for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area, emphasizing protection and promotion of the Delta's vibrant culture and history; advanced the Great California Delta Trail, expanding recreational opportunities for all in the Delta; reviewed hundreds of land-use projects, ensuring growth does not come at the expense of agriculture and historic communities; and added a tribal position to the Delta Protection Advisory Committee, bringing the perspective of those who have lived in the Delta since time immemorial.

With the support of all the Commission members, it is an honor to offer you the Delta Protection Commission 2023 Annual Report.

Sincerely,  
Diane Burgis  
Chair

# Background

The [Delta Protection Act](#) was adopted by the Legislature in 1992 and last amended in 2009. The Delta Protection Act declares that the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is “a natural resource of statewide, national, and international significance, containing irreplaceable resources, and that it is the policy of the State to recognize, preserve, and protect those resources of the Delta for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations.”

The Delta Protection Commission was created under the 1992 Act to recognize and protect the unique cultural, recreational, natural, and agricultural resources of the Delta, and the 2009 amendments to the Act further defined it as “the appropriate agency to identify and provide recommendations to the Delta Stewardship Council on methods of preserving the Delta as an evolving place.” With this mandate, the Commission focuses on the oversight of Delta land use and resource management; levees and emergency response; the support of Delta agriculture, recreation, tourism, and local economic development; and the protection of Delta historic, cultural, and natural resources.

The 15 members of the Commission include a member of the County Board of Supervisors from each of the five Delta counties (Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo); three elected city council members representing cities throughout the Delta; representatives from North, Central, and South Delta reclamation districts; and representatives from the California State Transportation Agency, California Natural Resources Agency, California Department of Food and Agriculture, and California State Lands Commission. Two ex officio members represent the California State Senate and the California State Assembly.

As required by Public Resources Code Section 29780, each year the Commission submits to the Governor and the state Legislature this Annual Report, describing the progress Commission actions have made towards fulfilling the requirements of the Delta Protection Act.

# 2023 Actions

## Land & Water

- Commission staff reviewed hundreds of local and regional land use projects for consistency with the [Land Use and Resource Management Plan \(LURMP\)](#) and submitted comment letters to various entities on land use projects, detailed on pages 7-10 in this report.
- Commission staff participated in or monitored activities related to Department of Water Resources' (DWR) [Delta Conveyance Project](#) , including the following:
  - Reviewed and prepared comments on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and submitted to the Corps on March 15, 2023.
  - Published a Draft *Survey of Cultural Resources in the Conveyance Project Area* for submittal to the Corps with the EIS comment letter.
  - Conferred with the affected counties and community representatives and participated in periodic briefings from DWR's Delta Conveyance Office staff.
  - Published a newsletter for Delta interested parties on the changes Commission staff recommended to a draft Programmatic Agreement under Section 106 of the National Heritage Preservation Act in our capacity as a consulting party to the Corps and the State Historic Preservation Office.

## Regional Economy

- Commission staff initiated an update to the 2019 Socioeconomic Indicators Report in collaboration with the Delta Stewardship Council. The Socioeconomic Indicators are a benchmarking tool developed from recommendations of the Commission's Economic Sustainability Plan to gauge effects of the existing and new Delta Plan and other policies on the Delta economy. They are designed to be revisited and updated approximately on a five-year cycle.
  - Staff retained researchers with social science, statistical and GIS expertise to compile and update the indicators based on the 2020 Decennial Census, American Communities Survey, and other data. The data format has been improved to facilitate future updates, and the categories of Community Anchor Institutions and Broadband Access were added. The report will be completed in 2024.

## Recreation & Tourism

- Commission staff initiated a process to prioritize new segments of the [Great California Delta Trail](#) (Delta Trail) including the following:
  - Provided letters supporting funding applications in Contra Costa County for:
    - Wayfinding signage along the Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail, a convergence of three important regional trails, the Delta Trail, Bay Area Ridge Trail, and the San Francisco Bay Trail.
    - The Bay Point Enhanced Bicycle-Pedestrian Improvements Project to create a safe local access route linking the Delta Trail at the Bay Point Regional Shoreline to important neighborhood destinations such as schools, a library and parks, and the Bay Point BART Station.
  - Brought together state and local trails planners to develop potential partnerships and identify new Delta Trail segments in early planning and design stages in Sacramento County.
  - Conducted two trail site visits with state and local trails planners to identify potential next segments eligible for Delta Trail designation or needing grant support for planning, design, and construction.
- Commission staff continued to lead projects related to the [Delta Tourism Awareness 5-Year Marketing Plan](#), including the following:
  - Implemented the “Welcome to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area” sign project. Signs in Yolo and Sacramento counties have been installed, marking the Delta National Heritage Area (NHA) boundary on Interstate 80, State Route 84, and at the Hood Franklin Road offramp from Interstate 5.
  - Promoted Delta community events in the *Delta Happenings* newsletter.

## Heritage

- Commission staff completed the Administrative Draft Management Plan (Management Plan) for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area, a process that involved the following:
  - Nine meetings with the [Delta NHA Management Plan Advisory Committee](#) and three meetings with the Organization and Resource Stewardship task groups.
  - Presentations to state agencies and local officials, including the Delta Stewardship Council and Yolo County Board of Supervisors, about potential partnerships with the NHA.

- Meetings with tribal representatives as part of a tribal consultation process for the Management Plan.
- Meetings with key stakeholders about the Management Plan.
- Work with Point Heritage Development Consulting to develop and release the Administrative Draft Management Plan for staff, Commission, and Delta NHA Management Plan Advisory Committee meeting review.
- Commission staff and Delta Leadership Program participants initiated planning efforts to participate in the National Park Service’s Junior Ranger program.

## Outreach & Education

Commission staff filled a vacant Information Officer I position, and the new hire has expanded communications efforts, including the following:

- Created a [news section](#) of the website containing original content, such as articles and news releases, and links to newsletters – a clearinghouse of information that is now easily accessible.
- Worked with California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) Website Support and Commission staff to improve website user experience and worked with a contractor to update the site and PDF documents contained in it to comply with Section 508 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act and other state laws and policies governing accessibility.
- Expanded the amount of original content in regular e-newsletters – the bi-weekly *Delta Happenings* and bi-monthly *Delta Heritage Courier* – to increase engagement.
- Photographed events in the Delta to build a library of images that capture the cultural vibrance of this unique region.
- Collaborated with CNRA on one [Secretary Speaker Series](#) event about the Delta (“Where the Rivers Meet,” Oct. 31) and two Best Practices sessions for communications professionals throughout the Agency.
- Created and improved internal templates that enhance brand recognition for the Delta Protection Commission, such as logoed background screens for virtual meetings, letterhead, and email signatures.
- Created a social media and e-newsletter campaign for Delta Flood Preparedness Week (Oct. 21-28), part of [California Flood Preparedness Week](#), and raised awareness of the Commission’s [deltafloodready.com](#) website, generating a 300% increase in website traffic over the previous year.

## Leadership & Development

- Expanded representation on the Delta Protection Advisory Committee by adding two seats - one for a member of the general public and one for a member or representative of a tribe with historic connections to the Delta.
- Reorganized the Administration and Finance division, including the following:
  - Identified the need for a Public Information Officer; reclassified a vacant position and filled it.
  - Identified the need for a Commission clerk role to centralize management of the Commission meetings and two advisory committees, reclassified a vacant position, and filled it.
  - Added a second authorized signatory.
- Filled the vacant Senior Environmental Planner position.
- Engaged an organizational assessment consultant to identify opportunities for improvement and program expansion.
- Prepared an informational binder for Commission members briefing them on the history of the Commission, its legislative mandates, and its key initiatives.
- Added a Delta as Place recurring presentation at Commission meetings to broaden Commission and public awareness of notable Delta institutions, issues, and culture.
- Received a 2023 Government Innovation Award from the American Society of Public Administration's Sacramento Chapter for the Delta Leadership Program, a joint program of the Delta Protection Commission and the Delta Leadership Foundation.

# Land Use Project Comment Letters

## Multi-County

### Delta Conveyance Project

Preferred project proposes to construct a 45-mile-long, 150-foot-deep, 6,000-cubic-feet-per-second tunnel and associated permanent and semi-permanent above-ground features such as tunnel launch and retrieval sites, maintenance shafts, tunnel muck stockpiles, access roads, and concrete manufacturing facilities, running roughly parallel to and west of Interstate 5 to a site south of the Byron Highway and Clifton Court Forebay adjacent to Bethany Reservoir. Delta project locations directly or indirectly impacted include portions of Yolo, Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Contra Costa Counties. The project requires environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and numerous permits from state and federal agencies, as well as Certification of Consistency with the Delta Plan to the Delta Stewardship Council.

**Authority:** Jurisdictional and non-jurisdictional project that may affect Delta resources

**Zone:** Primary and Secondary

**Comments:** Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS): Federal NEPA lead agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers published the DEIS in December 2022. The Commission submitted timely comments in March 2023 requesting consideration of no-project alternative and expressing objections to the scope of the area of impact considered. Together with the comment letter, the Commission also submitted a draft Summary of Cultural Resources potentially affected by the Conveyance project.

Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR): The lead agency Department of Water Resources released the FEIR on December 8, 2023. Commission staff are reviewing the document and responses to all comments.

**Project Size:** Preferred project is a 45-mile-long project tunnel alignment in a construction corridor ranging from 3 to 5 miles wide, including above-ground facilities, beginning in Hood, Sacramento County, passing through San Joaquin and Contra Costa counties, and ending at Bethany Reservoir in Alameda County.

**Farmland Conversion:** None at this time, but the preferred alignment will eventually result in loss of thousands of acres of farmland.



## Delta Levee Investment Strategy (DLIS) Rulemaking Process

**Authority:** Non-jurisdictional project that may affect Delta resources

**Zone:** Delta-wide

**Comments:** Support modifications to the definition of levee improvements. Discuss and address concerns about DLIS potentially impacting agencies' eligibility to receive Federal Emergency Management Agency funding. Meet with stakeholders and tour the Delta levee system.

**Project Size:** Delta-wide

**Farmland Conversion:** None

## Sacramento County

### Isleton Wastewater Treatment System Improvement Project Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND)

**Authority:** Jurisdictional

**Zone:** Primary

**Comments:** Project will not have an impact on Primary Zone resources and is consistent with the Land Use and Resources Management Plan. The Commission supports the project.

**Project Size:** Improvements at Wastewater Treatment Facility

**Farmland Conversion:** None

## Contra Costa County

### Wildhorse Road Two Parcel Minor Subdivision MND

**Authority:** Jurisdictional

**Zone:** Primary

**Comments:** Minimum parcel size of five acres for the General Agricultural Zoning District is not sufficient to support agricultural land use. The Commission encourages County staff to review and increase the minimum parcel sizes for agricultural zoning districts as part of the General Plan update.

**Project Size:** 10 acres

**Farmland Conversion:** None

## San Joaquin County

### Delta Smelt Preservation Project

**Authority:** Jurisdictional

**Zone:** Primary

**Comments:** Commission staff believe that the Project will have a potentially significant impact on agricultural resources by converting Prime Farmland on Bouldin Island to other uses. Potential construction-related transportation impacts along State Route 12. Commission staff encourage the project proponent to analyze cumulative impacts of restoration projects in the Primary Zone. A Draft Environmental Impact Report should be prepared for the project.

**Project Size:** 145 acres

**Farmland Conversion:** Temporary, potentially permanent

## Solano County

### Little Egbert Tract Multi-Benefit Project Notice of Preparation

**Authority:** Jurisdictional

**Zone:** Primary

**Comments:** The Commission is supportive of habitat restoration projects within the Delta, particularly those that provide increased flood protection and recreational opportunities. We urge review of the project for compliance with Land Use and Resource Management Plan policies. We have several concerns that should be addressed in the Draft EIR, including the conversion of existing farmland to non-agricultural uses, hydrological impacts on neighboring properties and for the region, and the potential impact of increased wildlife attractants on aircraft flight operations at the Rio Vista Airport and Travis Air Force Base.

**Project Size:** Approximately 3,000 acres

**Farmland Conversion:** Not available

## Yolo County

### Green Wave, Inc. & Green Wave Farms Cannabis Use Permit

**Authority:** Jurisdictional

**Zone:** Primary

**Comments:** The Commission seeks to promote and facilitate agriculture and agriculturally supporting commercial and industrial uses within the Delta. Community concerns should be addressed along with overall compliance with Cannabis Land Use Ordinance.

**Project Size:** 4 acres of canopy and two 6,000-square-foot buildings

**Farmland Conversion:** None

# 2023 Membership

## Commissioners

**Diane Burgis, Chair**

Supervisor, Contra Costa County

**John Vasquez, Vice Chair**

Supervisor, Solano County

**Oscar Villegas**

Supervisor, Yolo County

**Patrick Hume**

Supervisor, Sacramento County

**Steven Ding**

Supervisor, San Joaquin County

**Ron Kott**

Mayor, City of Rio Vista

**Paul Steele**

Councilmember, City of Isleton

**Alan Nakanishi**

Councilmember, City of Lodi

**James Paroli**

Representative, Central Delta Reclamation Districts

**Tom Slater**

Representative, North Delta Reclamation Districts

**Nick Mussi**

Representative, South Delta Reclamation Districts

**Toks Omishakin**

Secretary, California State Transportation Agency

**Karen Ross**

Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture

**Wade Crowfoot**

Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency

**Jennifer Lucchesi**

Land Management Division Chief, California State Lands Commission

## Ex Officio Members

**Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman**

California State Senate

**Honorable Carlos Villapudua**

California State Assembly

## Commission Staff

**Bruce Blodgett**

Executive Director

**Debra Waltman**

Assistant Executive Director

**Virginia Gardiner**

Program Manager

**Blake Roberts**

Program Manager

**Mike Avina**

Senior Environmental Planner

**Holly Heyser**

Information Officer

**Heather McClure**

Administrative Analyst



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