



Delta Counties Coalition

Contra Costa County · Sacramento County · San Joaquin County · Solano County · Yolo County

"Working together on water and Delta issues"

DCC Resiliency and Economic Recovery Actions for the Delta August 2020

The Delta Counties Coalition (DCC) works to protect and improve the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta Watershed, the largest estuary on the west coast of the Americas. The Draft Water Resilience Portfolio (Draft WRP) released in January 2020 includes several proposals that the DCC supports and would like to work with the California Natural Resources Agency (Resources Agency) to implement. In addition to the specific proposals in the Draft WRP, DCC supports other compatible actions and projects that also advance resiliency and recovery in the Delta. Many of these projects require the joint input and attention of the Resources Agency and the DCC in order to advance them to a point that they can be implemented.

Criteria, goals and priority Delta project examples are discussed below as DCC recommendations to promote economic recovery actions within the Delta. Further, these priorities focus on various programs and projects within the Delta that are included in, or compatible with the Draft WRP. The DCC stands ready to partner with the Resources Agency to advance these projects and programs to promote recovery and resiliency in the Delta.¹

Broad Criteria to Identify DCC Priority Projects

Projects that:

- Have the potential for broad support
- Can be on line within 5 to 10 years
- Have potential funding sources
- Can provide useful information
- Are designed to avoid negative offsite impacts provide multiple benefits
- Are supported by prior technical review and/or analysis
- Foster cooperation between local agencies and state
- Are independent of a Delta conveyance project

¹ The DCC also supports many other types of water projects, including those outside the Delta that increase regional water self-sufficiency. (E.g., Maintain and Diversify Water Supplies [WRP Proposals 1-8].) For this effort, the DCC is narrowing its focus on projects within the Delta that will promote and support economic recovery within the Delta.

DCC Priority Goals and Priority Project Examples

Goal #1: Increase reliability of water supply and drainage infrastructure for the Delta economy and communities to improve sustainability of the agricultural economy, including implementing flood protection improvements that benefit the system and the region.

Agriculture in the Delta faces many challenges, including water quality degradation, invasive aquatic species interfering with agricultural diversions, and lack of resources to protect agricultural lands from flooding.

A) System-wide Levee Improvements

Problem: Variable amounts of funding for Delta levees is available in the State budget and from bonds from year to year. Strengthening Delta levees is vitally important to safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of four million Delta Counties residents, protecting over \$60 billion of critical infrastructure, supporting a vital Delta County agricultural industry that contributes more than \$4 billion to the State's economy each year as well as boosting a Northern California mega-region economy with an \$875 billion annual gross regional product. Maintaining the integrity of the flood management system by ensuring stable funding for annual maintenance is necessary to minimize the risk of flooding in a changing climate. Levee improvements provide multiple benefits to the people of California, including protecting water supplies, communities, highways, utility facilities, and other infrastructure.

Actions: *Resources Agency should promote:*

- *Inclusion of at least \$100 million in levee funding specific to the Delta in the State Budget each year to continue to make progress in safeguarding statewide infrastructure and communities in the Delta.*
- *Inclusion of Delta specific funds in any future resiliency/recovery bond measures. While there is understandably a focus on multi-benefit projects to reduce flood risk in ways that benefit the ecosystem, inclusion of restoration in every project is not possible in every situation. Thus, funding should be made available for levee projects irrespective of whether ecosystem benefits are included on a project specific level as long as programmatic mitigation is provided for any biological impacts. This action aligns with Draft WRP Proposal 18 to help protect the economic and ecological vitality of the Delta.*

B) Delta Channel Capacity Maintenance

Problem: Certain channels (primarily in the South Delta) are choked with sediment and invasive weeds causing reduced flow, increase flood hazards, hinder navigation and goods movement, inhibit irrigation diversions, interfere with fish migration and recreational boating, increase residence time (leading to Harmful Algal Blooms), and reduce dissolved oxygen levels.

An ad hoc group of water agencies located in and out of the Delta² is working to develop an approach to channel capacity maintenance. Participating entities have voluntarily contributed \$150,000 in seed funds to move forward with the details of a proposed approach so that additional funding can be secured.

Action: *Resources Agency should promote and assist in this effort to address the negative impacts of Delta channel accretion. Such support could include providing technical staff support for the effort, along with identification of additional funding sources to plan for, and eventually implement, activities that would restore channel capacity. This action aligns with Draft WRP Proposal 18 to help protect the economic and ecological vitality of the Delta, and WRP Proposal 25.9 to make available to the public regularly-updated bathymetric analyses of channels.*

C) Carbon Emissions Reductions, Sequestration and Markets

Problem: Due to AB 32 and other regulatory developments, markets for carbon may be available to Delta farmers willing to participate. Current efforts to promote participation in the carbon markets in the Delta have focused on limited scientific data regarding alleged carbon dioxide emissions of Delta farms. While addressing climate change is an important priority, it is critical that Delta farmers not be disparaged in the process of seeking out solutions.

Action: *The Resources Agency should support collection and analysis of site-specific emissions data in the Delta, initially focusing on lands in public ownership that are piloting carbon reduction or sequestration projects. In addition, other means to reduce carbon emissions and build soils in the Delta should be promoted with willing landowners (e.g. Heathy Soils program). This action aligns with WRP Proposal 16 to Improve Soil Health.*

Goal #2: Promote projects that protect and improve ecosystem function and habitat quality that protect water quality, include Good Neighbor policies and expand and improve recreational opportunities in the Delta.

Numerous restoration projects have been proposed in the Delta. These

² South Delta Water Agency, Central Delta Water Agency, State Water Contractors and San Luis Delta Mendota Water Agency.

projects are often planned in a vacuum, without regard for local existing and planned land uses, or likely effects on water quality, flood protection and recreation.

A) Increasing Recreational Opportunities

Problem: The Delta lacks adequate recreational facilities to serve the local communities as well as visitors from outside the area. Boaters in particular have difficulty accessing recreation serving businesses such as marinas, restaurants and stores in towns along the rivers and sloughs.

Action: *Resources Agency should promote inclusion of recreational facilities in restoration projects. Such facilities should be considered early in the planning process and could include boat docks and launches, as well as facilities to support hunting and fishing. This action aligns with WRP Proposal 18 to help protect the economic and ecological vitality of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.*

B) Invasive Species Control

Problem: Invasive aquatic species are choking Delta waterways, hindering access to marinas and other recreational activities.

Action: *Resources Agency should promote expansion of invasive species removal beyond the current Department of Boating and Waterways program. This program is not keeping up with the growth of aquatic weeds and needs to be expanded. Collaborative efforts such as the multi-entity Invasive Species Task Force led by UCD researchers should receive necessary funding to continue this important work. This action aligns with WRP Proposal 12 to curb invasive species altering California waterways.*

C) Reduction of Harmful Algal Blooms

Problem: The incidence of Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in the Delta is increasing. Reduced flows through the Delta are the primary driver of HABs. HABs are hazardous to people and animals, and limit recreational activities.

Action: *Resources Agency should increase monitoring of HABs and develop projects to reduce the incidence of HABs. Such projects could include recirculation of water in areas where HABs are occurring. In addition, Resources Agency should work to ensure that any required flows resulting from the Water Quality Control Plan Update or a Voluntary Agreement go all the way through the Delta in order to help prevent HABs formation. This action aligns with WRP Proposal 12 to curb invasive species altering California waterways.*

D) Compatible Restoration with Good Neighbor Policies

Problem: Over the years there have been very expansive plans for restoration of the Delta, much of which has been mapped on private lands with no consultation with landowners and no commitment to willing sellers. These projects are often required by CVP and SWP Endangered Species permit requirements, and there is a great amount of pressure to minimize costs. The projects are often designed without regard to offsite impacts on neighboring landowners and islands and include no local benefits.

Action: *The Resources Agency should collaborate with the DCC and other stakeholders to develop Good Neighbor Policy recommendations that restoration project proponents must consider at the outset of project planning. In addition, restoration projects should include local benefits in the initial design in order to create greater community support (e.g., addition of recreational facilities where possible). The mutually agreed upon Good Neighbor Policies should be provided to the Delta Stewardship Council for inclusion as an exhibit in Chapter 4 of the Delta Plan, for broader access to the policies. Consideration of these issues early in the process would be more likely to lead to successful restoration projects that can be timely implemented. This action aligns with WRP Proposal 18 to help protect the economic and ecological vitality of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.*

Relevant Proposals from the Water Resiliency Portfolio Draft Report January 2020

Protect and Enhance Natural Systems

12. Curb invasive species altering California waterways.

12.1 Work to eradicate nutria, large rodents introduced to the Central Valley from South America, which jeopardize wetlands and levees by eating aquatic plants and burrowing.

12.2 Support programs that prevent, detect, and manage invasive species and pests; develop California-specific invasive species risk assessments; support early detection programs, and evaluate and improve weed management efforts.

[Relates to levee funding and invasive species management.]

16. Improve soil health and conservation practices on California farms and ranches.

16.1 Fund the Healthy Soils program, which supports on-farm practices that enhance water retention and provide other environmental benefits, through incentives, demonstrations, and technical assistance.

[Relates to carbon reductions and markets.]

16.2 Enhance agricultural lands for biodiversity, resilience, and habitat benefits through incentives for on-farm conservation practices and innovative partnerships.

[Relates to Delta compatible restoration.]

18. Help protect the economic and ecological vitality of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

18.1 Complete the update to the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan for San Francisco Bay and the Delta, as required by law, and implement the Plan, potentially through voluntary agreements.

[Relates to HABs control.]

18.2 Complete a climate change vulnerability assessment and adaptation strategy to protect people, with a particular focus on disadvantaged communities, habitat, water quality, and supply.

[Relates to levee funding.]

18.3 Add a requirement to the water management plans which urban and agricultural suppliers submit to the state every five years that mandates districts that receive water from Delta-based projects to demonstrate how they are reducing reliance on those supplies.

18.4 Provide incentives and technical advice to Delta landowners for creating managed wetlands or cultivating rice to reverse land subsidence and reduce carbon

emissions. Eliminate subsidence-inducing practices on state-owned lands and pursue alternative sources of revenue to support long-term land management.

[Relates to carbon market development.]

Be Prepared

25.9 Make available to the public regularly-updated bathymetric analyses of channels in the Delta to help local flood control agencies, landowners, and habitat managers better understand levee condition, habitat types, and channel siltation.

[Relates to Delta Channel Capacity Maintenance project]