



**DRAFT**

**SUMMARY FEBRUARY 29, 2024  
DELTA STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL MEETING**

For review and adoption by the Council at the April 25, 2024 meeting.

All meeting materials, presentations, and comment letters are available at  
<https://deltacouncil.ca.gov/council-meetings>

**MEETING SUMMARY**

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**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Chair Virginia Madueño called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM on February 29, 2024, at the Jean Harvie Community Center at 14273 River Road Walnut Grove, CA 95690.

**2. ROLL CALL – ESTABLISH A QUORUM (WATER CODE §85210.5)**

Roll call was taken, and a quorum was established. The following councilmembers were present and in person: Burgis, Damrell, Hueso, Lee, Mehranian, and Madueño.

The following councilmember was present remotely: Zingale.

Maryellen Burns, President of the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society (Historical Society) shared her personal history of the Delta and current initiatives of the Historical Society.

Chair Madueño thanked Burns for her time.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

*Justin Marsh with the University of California, Davis shared information about a research project focused on future salinity management strategies in the Delta.*

Chair Madueño and Marsh discussed the timeline of the project and the intended goals of the project.

Executive Officer Jessica Pearson, Marsh, and Chair Madueño discussed where individuals interested in learning more can access more information (available here: <https://delta-just-transitions-ucdavis.hub.arcgis.com/>).

Councilmember Mehranian and Marsh discussed the broad interdisciplinary team of the project, the structure of the project, and how data collected throughout the process will be analyzed.

Councilmember Burgis shared the challenges of sea level rise and salinity management that Contra Costa County works on in collaboration with the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission and the Council.

Pearson noted that this project was spearheaded by former Delta Lead Scientist Dr. Laurel Larson and that Council staff are working in collaboration with this team through the Salinity Management Workshops.

#### **4. CONSENT CALENDAR (ACTION ITEM)**

##### **a. Adoption of January 25, 2024, Meeting Summary**

##### **b. Consideration and Possible Approval of an Amendment to a Contract with the Regents of the University of California San Diego, California Sea Grant for the Position of Social Scientist Extension Specialist (Resolution 2024-04)**

Chair Madueño presented the agenda item for adopting the consent calendar.

Chair Madueño asked for public comment.

There was no public comment.

**Motion** (approve the consent calendar): offered by Councilmember Hueso, seconded by Councilmember Mehranian.

**Vote:** 7/0 - The motion was adopted (Burgis: Aye, Damrell: Aye, Hueso: Aye, Lee: Aye, Mehranian: Aye, Zingale: Aye, Madueño: Aye)

The agenda item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3UIrbl6>, minute 00:17:55.

## **5. CHAIR'S REPORT (INFORMATION ITEM)**

Chair Madueño highlighted the Tribal Summit that she attended earlier in the week and shared reflections about how the Council can continue to engage Tribal communities in the work of the Council. Chair Madueño shared key takeaways from the summit from the Tribal leaders.

### **a. Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC) Update**

Executive Fellow, Meenatchi Odaiyappan, began with an overview of DPIIC convening in March, including the Restoration Subcommittee meeting on March 7 and the March 19 meeting with the Delta Agency Science Workgroup. Odaiyappan next highlighted the upcoming DPIIC spring gathering taking place on April 15, in Stockton.

Chair Madueño commended the interagency collaboration and shared recent updates regarding recruiting additional agencies to the committee and highlighted the upcoming Delta Agency Science Workgroup and the DPIIC Spring Gathering.

Chair Madueño asked for public comment.

There was no public comment.

The agenda item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3UIrbl6>, minute 00:18:58.

## **6. EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT (INFORMATION ITEM)**

Executive Officer Jessica Pearson highlighted the upcoming Delta Adapts town hall, that would occur at the March 1 Council meeting. Pearson next provided an overview of the one new Covered Action Certification of Consistency with the Delta Plan. On February 9, the Department of Water Resources filed a certification of consistency for a tidal habitat restoration project located on Chipps Island, a

historically managed wetland for seasonal duck hunting in the southeastern edge of the Suisun Marsh. The Delta Plan designates the Suisun Marsh (including Chipps Island) as a Priority Habitat Restoration Area, Chipps Island is a 910-acre property located in Solano County, in the southeastern part of the Suisun Marsh composed of three separate parcels. The public review period was open through March 11, 2024.

Pearson noted comment letters submitted by Council staff. On January 29, Council staff submitted a comment letter to the Reclamation District 1601 on the Notice of Intent to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for Twitchell Island Wetland Enhancement and Restoration Project. On February 9, Council staff submitted a comment letter to the City of Pittsburg in regard to the City of Pittsburg Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the City of Pittsburg General Plan 2040 Update.

Pearson welcomed a new 2024 CA Sea Grant Fellow, Dane Whicker, to the Planning and Performance Division.

Pearson closed by highlighting the Quarterly Contract Report, Outreach Highlights Report, and Active Projects List are included in the Councilmember packets and online.

**a. Legal Update**

There was no legal update.

**b. Legislative Update (Action Item)**

Legislative and Policy Advisor, Brandon Chapin, began with an overview of the Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects Extension trailer bill, included in the budget package. Chapin provided a brief summary of the following bills: AB 2465, AB 2875, SB 1139, and SB 1402.

**c. Tribal Engagement Update (INFORMATION ITEM)**

Chapin reflected on the time since the Council Tribal Listening session on April 27, 2023, and the reasoning behind this new update to the Council. Chapin provided an overview of the Council's main tribal consultation efforts including the Environmental and Tribal Justice Issue Paper, Draft Delta Research Awards Notice, and the Delta Adapts Adaptation Plan. Chapin outlined past and upcoming

opportunities for the Council to amplify and listen to Tribal voices, including the upcoming State of the Estuary Conference, the Delta Research Awards, last year's Delta Legislative Tour, and other events. Chapin outlined the Delta Science Program's Interweaving Traditional Knowledge Assessment and other workshops and reviews the Delta Science Program and the Delta Independent Science Board have done that have included tribal voices. Chapin closed with an overview of upcoming events and initiatives.

Chair Madueño and Chapin discussed ways to work with the Native American Heritage Commission, grants and capacity building, and tribal co-management. Chair Madueño, Councilmember Hueso, and Chapin discussed renaming Delta Islands.

**d. Council Priorities Report (INFORMATION ITEM)**

Pearson provided context for the Council Priorities presentation, which outlines the workplan priorities for the Council for 2024, and introduced Deputy Executive Officer Ryan Stanbra, Deputy Executive Officer for Science Henry DeBey, Deputy Executive Officer for Planning and Performance Jeff Henderson, and Legislative and Policy Advisor Brandon Chapin. Henderson began with an overview of current and upcoming work of Council staff that supports implementing the Delta Plan. Chapin provided updates on the upcoming events and reports of DPIIC. DeBey outlined the past and upcoming work of the Delta Science Program. Stanbra reviewed the efforts of Council Staff to enhance outreach and engagement including the addition of a Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) role on the Council staff. Chapin highlighted continued collaboration with legislators at the local and state level. Stanbra closed by thanking Council Staff and the administrative department for supporting all the work the Council does.

Councilmember Zingale and DeBey discussed the planned research around the social benefits of Delta restoration.

Councilmember Mehranian, Pearson, and Henderson discussed the timing of the Council's covered action process and how that process works alongside the Council's other work.

Councilmember Mehranian and DeBey discussed the history and current function of the Delta Science Tracker.

Councilmember Burgis, Councilmember Mehranian and DeBey discussed the lack of synthesis on the Delta Science Tracker.

Chair Madueño and Stanbra discussed Council JEDI initiatives and goals for the new position. Chair Madueño discussed the opportunity for the Council to foster more collaboration and unification in the science community.

Chair Madueño, Councilmember Burgis, Chapin, and DeBey discussed efforts to interweave Traditional Knowledge at the Council.

Chair Madueño asked for public comment.

There was no public comment.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3Ulrbl6>, minute 00:30:38.

## **7. LEAD SCIENTIST REPORT (INFORMATION ITEM)**

Lead Scientist Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers shared her monthly article highlight:

*Dettinger, M., Wilson, A., & McGurk, G. (2023). Keeping Water in Climate-Changed Headwaters Longer. San Francisco Estuary and Watershed Science, 21(4).*

<http://dx.doi.org/10.15447/sfews.2023v21iss4art1>

The authors of this newly-released San Francisco Estuary and Watershed Science essay emphasize that there will always be uncertainty in the amount of water that will arrive in the form of precipitation and suggest focusing future planning on the changes in how precipitation arrives. There are many projections and scenarios about the future of California's climate, each with a range of projections about how California's water supply will be impacted. In general, scenarios predict a future of warmer temperatures, less snowpack, earlier and flashier runoff, drier summer conditions, and potentially increased intensity of wildfires. In a future with less snowpack in the Sacramento-San Joaquin watershed, holding non-channelized waters (headwaters) for longer can potentially restore the slow drainage processes

provided by snow storage, notably an important delay in flows toward warmer months.

The authors lay out three potential management strategies for retaining the water received upstream in non-channelized headwaters longer: 1) soils and percolation management as a co-benefit in forest health restoration activities, 2) beaver-population restoration or an increased amount of beaver-inspired headwater infrastructure, and 3) forecast-informed reservoir operation strategies (FIRO). Dr. Windham-Myers highlighted that this paper encourages thinking of water supply strategies as an integrated system, and focused on solutions already happening on the landscape that could be optimized for enhanced retention of waters.

Councilmember Hueso shared his experience working on issues related to water capture, with an emphasis on San Diego, the Tijuana River and how the Delta and surrounding watershed will be affected by increased flows. Councilmember Hueso and Dr. Windham Myers discussed water capture solutions in California.

Councilmember Burgis and Dr. Windham Myers discussed how models were used to predict the precipitation in the future, the drivers of weather pattern change, and how the Colorado River will be affected in the future.

Councilmember Hueso and Dr. Windham-Myers discussed aquifer usage and recharge solutions. Chair Madueño and Dr. Windham-Myers discussed the future of atmospheric river precipitation.

Chair Madueño asked for public comment.

There was no public comment.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3Ulrbl6>, minute 01:37:34.

## **8. STATEN ISLAND WETLAND RESTORATION AND CARBON FARMING FOR HABITAT, CLIMATE, AND COMMUNITIES (INFORMATION ITEM)**

Deputy Executive Officer for Planning and Performance, Jeff Henderson, began with an overview of the project and introduced the panel: Pete McHugh, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Rachel Wigginton, Delta Conservancy, and Isabella Gonzalez Potter, The Nature Conservancy. Henderson outlined the process projects go through to meet the requirements of a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects (SERP). McHugh provided background on the SERP program and other restoration permitting and CEQA tools. McHugh reviewed the SERP process, the responsibilities of the Lead Agency of the project, the role of CDFW in this process, considerations for projects in the Delta, and activities and data of the program to date.

Wigginton overviewed the role of the Delta Conservancy as the CEQA lead agency for this project. Gonzalez-Potter reviewed the role of The Nature Conservancy as the landowner of Staten Island along with the partner agencies supporting this project. Gonzalez-Potter provided an overview of Staten Island and the project area as well as the project goals, the habitat benefits for native species, and additional project benefits including stopping and reversing ground subsidence and the reduction of Greenhouse gas Emissions. Gonzalez-Potter outlined the phases and funding of the project, the project outreach to date, and timeline, and next steps of the project.

Councilmember Burgis shared her support of the SERP program. Councilmember Lee and Wigginton discussed the near-term goals of the project to create functional habitat for native species.

Chair Madueño, Councilmember Burgis, and Henderson discussed future SERP projects planned for the Delta, and the Council's future review of those projects.

Councilmember Mehranian, Wigginton, Lauren Damon with the Delta Conservancy, and Dr. Windham-Myers discussed the difference between carbon farming, carbon sequestration and the carbon market. Councilmember Burgis, Councilmember Mehranian and Pearson discussed the carbon market and the value of carbon. Councilmember Mehranian, Councilmember Hueso and Councilmember Burgis discussed the legislature's role in the carbon market and the regulation that established the carbon credit.

Chair Madueño asked for public comment.



*Gilbert Cosio, River Delta Consulting, shared his support for the SERP program, and his concern about raising the water table on neighboring islands when you raise the surface water level on heavily subsided land, and if the project looked into the phenomenon.*

Wigginton shared the history of flooding in this project area and the project's outreach efforts to neighboring landowners which did not raise any concerns of raising the water table.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3Ulrbl6>, minute 02:00:38.

## **8. CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES (DWR) DELTA CONVEYANCE UPDATE**

Carrie Buckman with the Department of Water Resources began by highlighting how the conveyance project could have been used this year, had it been in place. Buckman next reviewed the project's permitting process and the project's Endangered Species Act compliance process. Buckman outlined the project milestones to date and into 2025. Buckman reviewed the responses to the Council's comments received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Councilmember Damrell and Buckman discussed the timeline of the cost estimate and benefit analysis. Councilmember Burgis, Councilmember Mehranian, and Buckman discussed funding mechanisms for the operation of the project.

Councilmember Burgis, Pearson, and Buckman discussed federal contractors and other agencies who are and are not project proponents.

Councilmember Lee and Buckman discussed the high-level differences between the WaterFix project (the previous project) and the Bethany Reservoir Alignment alternative (the alternative selected in the Environmental Impact Report published in December). Councilmember Lee, Councilmember Zingale, and Buckman discussed the estimated water allocation had the project been in operation this year.

Councilmember Burgis, Buckman, and Pearson discussed the permitting process timeline, when the project could come before the Council, reviewed the funding timeline, the EIR comments and the Community Benefits Program for the project.

Pearson highlighted that the Delta Independent Science Board will submit an additional letter on the published EIR.

Councilmember Mehranian and Buckman discussed how the water allocation estimates are calculated.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3UIrbl6>, minute 02:47:08.

## **10. PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING**

The next Council meeting will take place on April 25. Please refer to the posted meeting notice 10 days before the meeting for further information or updates.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

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