

## Good Neighbor Checklist

Habitat restoration projects have many benefits, but can also affect neighboring properties, agriculture, infrastructure and water resources. Inclusion of Good Neighbor considerations into habitat restoration project planning can support agricultural communities, reinforce the benefits of conservation partnerships, reduce conflict and project delays, and help achieve sustainable conservation. Habitat restoration project planners and managers can use the following checklist to help ensure that restoration projects are planned and designed to avoid or reduce conflicts with existing neighboring land uses.

Some of the checklist items are also considered in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and regulatory review processes. The purpose of the checklist is to encourage early conversations and coordination with neighboring interests, and it does not substitute for any other process.

Good Neighbor Restoration Projects:

### *Siting and Planning*

- Is the project sited on public or conservation-entity owned lands, or where private property is required, has there been engagement to find willing sellers?
- If there are existing agricultural or conservation easements, has thought been given to how to incorporate or avoid conflicts with them?
- Is the project sited to avoid fragmenting existing farms?
- Have neighbors and stakeholders been included in the early planning stage?
- Will the project potentially disturb utilities, roads, bridges, or other infrastructure that serve local uses? If so, are those uses taken into account during project planning?
- Is the project designed to avoid interfering with other beneficial water uses (e.g., existing water diversions, boating, fishing, and recreation)?
- Will the project design avoid or reduce damage to nearby drainage, irrigation, and flood control facilities (e.g., levees) during construction and operation and avoid conflicting management practices?
- Has the project considered buffers where restoration lands could potentially interfere with surrounding agricultural lands or where agricultural lands could potentially interfere with restoration lands?
- As a result of the project, are special status species on the project site expected to increase markedly in abundance, and potentially move from the site to neighboring lands or waterways? If so, has coordination on safe harbor or other protections for neighboring land and water uses been considered?
- Is the project designed so that any new public access is compatible with, would benefit, and would avoid or reduce conflict with, local businesses, landowners and residents?

### *Construction, Operation and Maintenance*

- Is the project designed to avoid or reduce project dust, traffic, vibration, noise, and lighting impacts?
- Is the project designed to minimize project traffic during commute and harvest periods?
- Has the project considered utilizing invasive species protection plans, including potential long-term commitments or funding to:
  - Protect against proliferation of mosquitos to protect against arboviruses, which can lead to injury and mortality of wildlife and humans?
  - Monitor and treat terrestrial and aquatic weeds and set specific triggers for action?
- Has the project considered monitoring and mitigating project-related changes to local water quality and quantity to:
  - Protect beneficial water uses from harmful algal blooms, nitrates, phosphorous, and methylmercury?
  - Avoid drainage, seepage or changes in the water table that impair neighboring agricultural or other activities?
- Does the project consider, as applicable, mitigation for conversion of productive agricultural land in the form of conservation easements, or other measures to enhance local agricultural productivity?
- Does the project have an operation and maintenance plan that includes, as applicable, the ability to maintain site security, prevent trespass, manage any publicly accessible areas, and control flooding and weeds?

### *Accessible Community Interface*

- Does the project provide for an Ombudsman Office or other means to:
  - Facilitate stakeholders and affected landowners and local agency discussions regarding offsite impacts and options to address them?
  - Provide a way to discuss resolution of disputes prior to resorting to the Government Claims Act or other legal claims processes?
  - Provide regular project updates to the affected public?

### *Background and References for Good Neighbor Checklist*

In 2020, a small group of Delta stakeholders representing reclamation districts, landowners and Delta counties approached the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to request that DWR work with them to update the Good Neighbor Checklist prepared in 2014 as part of the Agriculture and Land Stewardship Framework. Over the course of a few meetings, this updated draft checklist was created and later submitted to the Delta Stewardship Council for inclusion as an exhibit to ER Recommendation “B” in the Ecosystem Amendment. Representatives from Solano and Yolo Counties, the Delta Protection Commission, Delta Conservancy and DWR commented on the updated checklist, which built on the work of the key references listed below.

Delta Conservancy. 2019. Delta Public Lands Strategy: A Guide for Conservation and Sustainability Across the West, Central, and Northeast Delta. Available at: [http://deltaconservancy.ca.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2019/01/Delta\\_Public\\_Lands\\_Strategy\\_Final\\_1-22-19.pdf](http://deltaconservancy.ca.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2019/01/Delta_Public_Lands_Strategy_Final_1-22-19.pdf)

Delta Stewardship Council. 2020. Delta Plan Chapter 4 - Protect, Restore, and Enhance the Delta Ecosystem – May 2020 Draft Ecosystem Amendment. Available at: <https://deltacouncil.ca.gov/pdf/delta-plan/2020-04-15-draft-ch-04.pdf>

Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). 2018. Delta Conservation Framework – A Delta in Common. Available at: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Watersheds/DCF>

Department of Water Resources (DWR). 2019. Agricultural and Land Stewardship Framework and Strategies. Available at: <https://water.ca.gov/-/media/DWR-Website/Web-Pages/Programs/California-Water-Plan/Docs/Update2013/Other/Agriculture-and-Land-Stewardship-Framework-and-Strategies.pdf>