

2026 Delta Restoration Forum: Showcased Projects & Programs



Delta Plan Interagency
Implementation
Committee

DELTA STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL



SACRAMENTO - SAN JOAQUIN
DELTA CONSERVANCY
A California State Agency



Delta
Stewardship
Council

A CALIFORNIA STATE AGENCY

The following projects and programs were represented at the fourth annual Delta Restoration Forum held on June 18, 2026, co-hosted by the Delta Stewardship Council and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy. Forum materials are available by emailing dpiicrestorationsubcommittee@deltacouncil.ca.gov. Please contact the project/program proponents for additional project-specific information.

ARCF Sacramento River Mitigation Site at Grand Island

Nicky Schleeter (nicole.m.schleeter@usace.army.mil), Mick Porter (michael.d.porter@usace.army.mil), US Army Corps of Engineers

The American River Common Features (ARCF) Sacramento River Mitigation Site was identified and designed to compensate for adverse impacts to federally listed species and their habitat incurred by placing rock slope protection along the Sacramento River levees. The site will reconnect floodplain habitat to Steamboat Slough at the confluence of the Sacramento River, enhancing food-web production and providing off-channel habitat for juvenile salmonids. The interior of the site will be graded to provide diverse habitats in all tidal and water years, including fully inundated zones, transitional zones, and upland zones. Additional information on the ARCF project can be found on the website: sacleveeupgrades.com.

BirdReturns: Delivering Habitat for Migratory Birds along the Pacific Flyway

Bekka Rosenkrantz (bekka.rosenkrantz@tnc.org), Billy Abbott (william.abbott@tnc.org), The Nature Conservancy

Jodi Pinder, Ashley Seufzer, California Audubon

BirdReturns is a flexible, cost-effective habitat marketplace that increases shallow flooding across agricultural landscapes to support migratory birds at the times and locations where habitat is most needed. Operating in California's Sacramento Valley and Delta, BirdReturns is an incentive-based program that creates temporary wetland habitat, ensuring migratory birds have places to rest and refuel during their long journeys along the Pacific Flyway. In addition to supporting bird populations, BirdReturns delivers multiple co-benefits for farmers, wetland managers, and local communities. Ultimately, the program's goal is to help restore and sustain migratory bird populations across the Pacific Flyway.

2027 Central Valley Flood Protection Plan Update

David Moldoff (david.moldoff@water.ca.gov), Lori Clamurro Chew (lori.e.clamurro-chew@water.ca.gov), Christopher Williams (christopher.williams@water.ca.gov), Hilary Murphy (hilary.murphy@water.ca.gov), California Department of Water Resources (DWR)

The Central Valley Flood Protection Plan (CVFPP) is California's strategic blueprint for managing and reducing flood risks in the highly vulnerable Central Valley, where over 1.3 million people and \$223 billion in economic assets, including \$17 billion in agricultural activity, are at risk. First adopted in 2012 and updated every five years, the CVFPP provides a 30-year vision for flood risk management, emphasizing regional planning, collaboration, and a multi-benefit approach that taps into diverse funding sources. The 2027 CVFPP Update will be the third update and will include up-to-date information on flood risk under existing and future climate scenarios (Technical Analysis), conservation considerations (formerly contained in a separate companion Conservation Strategy but now fully integrated into the CVFPP), the status and description of flood facilities (Flood System Status Report and State Plan of Flood Control Descriptive Document), and a strategy for long and short term investment in flood risk reduction activities (Investment Strategy). In addition, the 2027 CVFPP Update will include an interactive public website containing tools and resources that will inform flood management planning and investments – the CVFPP Portal. The CVFPP Portal will enhance transparency and accessibility, streamline the collection and use of flood management data, and enable continuous tracking of performance toward meeting flood, ecological, social equity, and other metrics of importance in the CVFPP.

Delta Stewardship Council Initiatives

dpiicrestorationsubcommittee@deltacouncil.ca.gov

The Delta Stewardship Council is an independent California State agency created to advance the State's coequal goals for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta: a more reliable statewide water supply and a healthy and protected ecosystem, both achieved in a manner that protects and enhances the unique characteristics of the Delta as an evolving place. The Council carries out its mission by implementing the Delta Plan, an enforceable long-term sustainable management plan to ensure coordinated action in the Delta at the federal, State, and local levels. Our agency has two main divisions: the Planning & Performance Division, which leads Delta Plan implementation, updates, and regulatory review of projects for consistency with the Delta Plan, as well as other planning efforts; and the Delta Science Program, which funds, synthesizes, and communicates scientific research relevant to the Delta. Council staff provided handouts on relevant Council initiatives. Learn more about our work at deltacouncil.ca.gov and check out our events calendar (deltacouncil.ca.gov/events) for future events.

Elk Slough Fish Passage and Flood Improvement Project

Tom Slater (tslaterdee@yahoo.com), President, Reclamation District No. 999

Gilbert Cosio (gcosio@river-deltaconsulting.com), River Delta Consulting

Doug Brown (doug@douglasenv.onmicrosoft.com), Douglas Environmental

The project proposes to restore fish passage to Elk Slough, a major historical distributary channel in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Fish passage would be restored in two phases, with the first phase including removing accumulated sediment at the upstream head of Elk Slough that blocks fish movement between the slough and the Sacramento River. The first phase would also include the implementation of a bank stabilization and riparian restoration program along the banks of Elk Slough. The second phase consists of replacing the existing levee and culvert at the head of Elk Slough with a bridge and constructing operable gates at the upstream and downstream ends of the slough to fully restore fish passage through the slough while also improving flood protection for Reclamation Districts 999 and 150.

Funding Opportunity for Subsidence, Ecosystem, and Community Access Projects in the Delta and Suisun Marsh

Lauren Damon (lauren.damon@deltaconservancy.ca.gov), Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy is committed to working in partnership with local communities to protect, enhance, and restore the Delta's environment, economy, agriculture, and working landscapes. In support of this mission, the Delta Conservancy will soon be accepting concept proposals for multi-benefit projects in the Delta and Suisun Marsh. Proposals will be accepted for three project types: 1) Nature-Based Solutions, 2) Ecosystem Restoration and Climate Adaptation, and 3) Community Enhancement and Public Access. To learn more about previously funded projects and receive updates on the upcoming solicitation, please visit the Delta Conservancy's Grant Program web page: deltaconservancy.ca.gov/grant-program.

Franks Tract Futures (3) Feasibility Study

Alejo Kraus-Polk (akraus-polk@esassoc.com), Michelle Orr (morr@esassoc.com),
Environmental Science Associates

Brett Milligan (bmilligan@ucdavis.edu), UC Davis, Metamorphic Landscapes Lab

The goals of the Franks Tract Futures project are to benefit native and desirable species by re-establishing natural ecological processes and habitats, provide enhanced recreational opportunities and other community benefits, and improve water quality by attenuating salinity intrusion within the unique landscape of Franks Tract State Park in the Central Delta. All restoration designs for the project have been collaboratively co-designed with local communities, the general public, and regional, state, and federal agencies. Franks Tract (3) is a third round of planning focused on generating creative funding and implementation strategies to actualize the project. Project website: franks-tract-futures-ucdavis.hub.arcgis.com.

Goat Island Tidal Marsh Restoration and Public Access Improvement Project

Stuart Siegel (siegel@sfsu.edu, stuart@siegeleenvironmental.com), San Francisco Bay
National Estuarine Research Reserve and Siegel Environmental

Kelly Santos, (kelly@solanolandtrust.org), Solano Land Trust

This project will restore 80 acres of diked marsh to tidal action, reconnect linkages with a small seasonal watershed and its alkali ponds, restore the natural wetland-upland transition zone, manage invasive Phragmites, and attempt to minimize feral pig impacts to the marsh. Public access improvements include new trails, improvements to existing trails, an elevated boardwalk within the restored tidal marsh, elevated wildlife viewing blinds atop the boardwalk, outdoor access improvements for mobility impaired, and interpretive signage. The project site is within the Rush Ranch Open Space Preserve, owned by the Solano Land Trust. Rush Ranch is one of two Reserves of the SF Bay National

Estuarine Research Reserve and serves as a vital place for public access, education, research, and stewardship.

Just Transitions in the Delta: Drought, Salinity, and Sea Level Rise

Brett Milligan (bmilligan@ucdavis.edu), UC Davis, Metamorphic Landscapes Lab

The Just Transitions in the Delta Project is a transdisciplinary research project focused on envisioning, designing, and modeling a diverse range of future delta salinity and climate adaptation scenarios that are built on diverse public and expert input. The project uses a participatory scenario planning process to co-design and comparatively assess a set of six different scenarios. The project's two most-preferred adaptation scenarios are those that entail robust ecological restoration and multi-benefit 'nature-based' infrastructure, both at the scale of the Delta and the scale of its much larger watershed. More details and project documentation are available at the project's website: delta-just-transitions-ucdavis.hub.arcgis.com/

Little Franks Tract Levees: A Dotted Line of Habitats

Adam Gelfand (agelfand@ccrd.org), Chris Lim (clim@ccrd.org), Ben Weise (bweise@ccrd.org), Contra Costa Resource Conservation District

Anjali Shakya (anjali.shakya@deltaconservancy.ca.gov), Lauren Damon (lauren.damon@deltaconservancy.ca.gov), Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy

Imagine an island, submerged but for the dotted line of its broken levees. This is what a drowned island looks like. The partially submerged levees are covered in decades of Himalayan blackberry bramble- a far cry from the asparagus farm that once existed on this island. These levees of Little Franks Tract provide an opportunity for innovative, novel approaches to habitat restoration. Since April 2023, the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District has been working to transform this levee from a seedbank of invasive species into a native plant oasis. Soon, willows will sway in the Delta breeze, tule reeds will rebuild the soil as they have for centuries, and marsh wrens and otters will make their homes along the remnants of this old island.

Peters Pocket Tidal Marsh Restoration Project

Elise Ferrarese (eferrarese@americanrivers.org), American Rivers

Peters Pocket is an 879-acre site at the confluence of Hass and Cache Sloughs within the Yolo Bypass Cache Slough region of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. American Rivers, Siegel Environmental, and Gillenwater Consulting are near completion of an initial feasibility study, including hydrodynamic modeling, wetland delineation, property appraisal, land rights assessment, minerals assessment, special status species evaluations,

climate change vulnerability assessment, opportunities and constraints report, and road map to implementation, conducted with support of the California Natural Resources Agency. In the next phase of the project, American Rivers, in partnership with state and federal agencies and local tribes, will develop engineered designs for the restoration of approximately 810 acres: 400 acres of tidal marsh, 250 acres of seasonal alkali wetlands, 140 acres of riparian forest, and 20 acres of uplands. Anticipated activities include tidal channel excavation, setback levee construction to protect adjacent agricultural lands, external levee retirement, wetland grading, and strategic levee breaching.

RCDs Partner with DWR to Steward Public Lands in the Delta

Elizabeth Davis (elizabeth.davis@solanorcd.org), Amy King (amy.king@solanorcd.org),
Solano Resource Conservation District

Molly Ferrell (molly.ferrell@water.ca.gov), California Department of Water Resources (DWR)

The DWR has partnered with Solano Resource Conservation District (RCD) and other RCDs to steward habitat enhancement and mitigation sites within the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. This partnership allows local experts (RCDs) to enhance and maintain native habitat in the Delta on lands owned by DWR while also contributing to RCD capacity building. As more lands become restored within the Delta, long-term stewardship becomes more necessary, and this is one pathway to stewarding lands within the region. You can learn more about this program here: solanorcd.org/?view=article&id=206&catid=16.

In addition to the above partnership, Solano RCD provides technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to plan and implement climate- and wildlife-friendly practices on their properties, including cover crops, hedgerows, windbreaks, vegetated waterways, and more. solanorcd.org/projects-and-programs/conservation-planning-services/conservation-planning.html.

Restoring and Revitalizing Stockton's Mormon Slough. Community-led and community-built

Artie Valencia (artie@restorethedelta.org), Restore the Delta

Karen Verpeet (karenv@sfei.org), The San Francisco Estuary Institute

Restore The Delta has convened a participatory planning and decision-making body called the Mormon Slough Restoration Association (MSRA) to transform Mormon Slough, a former channel stretching six miles across South and East Stockton, into a publicly accessible greenway and park. The MSRA is developing a long-term plan for the restoration of the slough as a recreational amenity, revitalized ecological space, and multi-benefit flood risk mitigation project. Our goal is to:

- i. Restore habitats & natural beauty
- ii. Create urban flood mitigation
- iii. Support community-driven economic development
- iv. Improve community health by reducing HABs
- v. Foster safer, more resilient neighborhoods

SFEI is developing a broad vision for the Stockton Slough, along with conceptual designs for two pilot sites. The Emergency Food Bank Site aims to transform a fire-hazardous, overgrown ditch into a vibrant pocket park featuring community gardens, trails, and shade trees. The second site, Solari Ranch, has the potential to become a community park equipped with a center, pollinator gardens, and family amenities like play structures. Website: restorethedelta.org/restoring-the-mormon-slough-together/

River Partners Tribal Engagement

Austin Stevenot (astevenot@riverpartners.org), Julie Rentner (jrentner@riverpartners.org), River Partners

As the First Director of Tribal Engagement for River Partners, Austin works to bring tribal voices to the table with their planning and implementation of their projects, with the long-term goal of land back.

The Staten Island Carbon Project: Farming Carbon for Delta Resilience

Sydney Chamberlin (s.j.chamberlin@tnc.org), Michelle Passero (mpassero@tnc.org), Rodd Kelsey (rkelsey@tnc.org), The Nature Conservancy

Jerred Dixon (jerred.dixon@cfrstaten.com), Conservation Farms and Ranches

Over the past 200 years, the Delta has transformed: land-use practices have converted large wetlands with organic peat soils into agricultural lands. When exposed to air, these fertile peat soils release substantial amounts of greenhouse gases (GHGs) that contribute to climate change while also causing the land to subside. This has resulted in heavily subsided islands that put strain on the levee system protecting California's water supplies, increasing flood risk that threatens communities and infrastructure, while also increasing the risk and difficulty of farming due to increasing groundwater seepage. On Staten Island, The Nature Conservancy and partner Conservation Farms & Ranches are demonstrating how strategically rewetting peat soils through rice cultivation and wetland restoration can restore soil carbon – stopping land subsidence, reducing GHG emissions, and enhancing high-quality habitat for migratory birds and other native species.

This project demonstrates how ‘carbon farming’ can provide climate, ecological, and economic benefits together while supporting sustainable agriculture.

Utilizing Spray Drone Technology for Invasive Plant Management

Desmond Mackell (dmackell@suisunrcd.org), Steve Chappell (schappell@suisunrcd.org),
Suisun Resource Conservation District

The Suisun Resource Conservation District is incorporating new spray drone technology into our Pest Weed Control Program. This initiative aims to address the encroachment of non-native *Phragmites australis* in the marsh through targeted treatments. The use of drones will enhance treatment effectiveness in hard-to-reach areas, reduce chemical waste and environmental impact, minimize exposure risks, track applications, and lower labor costs. SRCD plans to integrate this technology with existing management practices, such as mowing, manual removal, and prescribed burns, to improve wetland ecosystem health and support wildlife. More information on SRCD’s Pest Weed Control Program can be found at suisunrcd.org/programs/#pestweedcontrol.

Webb Tract Rice Development and Wetland Restoration Projects

John Hindley, PhD (jhindley@mwdh2o.com), Malinda Stalvey (mstalvey@mwdh2o.com),
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Metropolitan received a \$20.9 million grant through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy’s Nature-Based Solutions: Wetland Restoration Grant Program. The grant funds design, environmental documentation, permitting and construction of wetlands, rice fields, and associated improvements on Webb Tract over a five-year period. The grant also funds the quantification of greenhouse gas emissions before and after construction to calculate the gas reductions realized from the project. Metropolitan is providing in-kind staff services and additional funding to match the grant award. Land leveling for the rice project is expected to begin in the summer of 2026, with the first rice crop expected in 2027. The Wetland Restoration Project is in the final stages of the planning and design phase, with construction planned to begin in summer 2026.