SACRAMENTO-SAN JOAQUIN DELTA CONSERVANCY

Figure 1: Michael Pieretti, used with permission

INTERIM STRATEGIC PLAN

January 19, 2011

To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.

ANATOLE FRANCE

A hundred years after we are gone and forgotten, those who never heard of us will be living with the results of our actions.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

A common mistake people make when trying to design something foolproof is to underestimate the ingenuity of complete fools.

DOUGLAS ADAMS

Inaugural 2010-2011
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Growth is inevitable and desirable, but destruction of community character is not. The question is not whether your part of the world is going to change. The question is how.

EDWARD T. McMAHON

The best way to predict the future is to invent it.

IMMANUEL KANT

Executive Summary

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy (the Conservancy) is a state agency within the Natural Resources Agency that was established through legislation on February 3, 2010.

The Conservancy is the primary state agency to implement ecosystem restoration in the Delta in collaboration and cooperation with local governments and interested parties. In addition, the Conservancy is to lead efforts that advance both environmental protection and the economic well-being of Delta residents in a complementary manner. These are the Conservancy's co-equal responsibilities.

Under its co-equal responsibilities, the Conservancy has a broad array of other charges including protecting and preserving Delta agriculture and working landscapes and assisting the Delta regional economy through targeted investments.

The Conservancy has statewide significance because it is integral to achieving the state's co-equal goals of ecosystem restoration and water supply reliability. The Conservancy will accomplish this broad mission through collaboration and cooperation with various partners.

The Delta Reform Act of 2009—of which the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Act is a part—tasks the Delta Protection Commission, the Delta Stewardship Council, and the Sacramento – San Joaquin Delta Conservancy with different, yet interrelated and complementary, roles in the recovery of the Delta. Delta Conservancy staff meet regularly with its sister Delta agencies to build strong partnerships, share information

The Delta and Suisun Marsh

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is at the confluence of the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River basins. This confluence is unique because the two river deltas merge into an inland delta. The Delta is the largest estuary on the west coast of North and South Americas, and is a unique natural resource of local, state, and national significance.

The Suisun Marsh is the largest contiguous brackish water marsh remaining on the west coast of North America and is a critical part of the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta estuary ecosystem. The Marsh encompasses more than 10 percent of California's remaining natural wetlands.

The Delta is a significant agricultural resource. The Delta and Suisun Marsh, part of the Pacific Flyway, also offer numerous opportunities for recreation, such as boating, fishing, hiking, birding, and hunting.

and strategy, coordinate policies and programs, avoid duplication of efforts, and further all three agencies' goals and mandates.

The Conservancy Board is required by statute to complete and adopt a strategic plan within two years after hiring its executive officer (Public Resources Code Section 32376). The strategic plan will guide the vision, mission, and objectives of the Conservancy over the next three to five years.

Under Section 32376, the strategic plan will be developed in cooperation with various stakeholders through an open, public process. The plan will be designed to address the Conservancy's role and proposed actions regarding land use, recreation, water and flood management, and habitat conservation and protection within the legal Delta and Suisun Marsh.

The strategic plan shall also establish priorities and criteria for projects and programs, based upon an assessment of program requirements, resources, and funding needs throughout the Delta. Finally, the statute requires that the Conservancy's strategic plan be consistent with the Delta Plan, the Delta Protection Commission's Resource Management Plan, the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan, the Suisun Marsh Preservation Act of 1977, and the Habitat Management, Preservation, and Restoration Plan for the Suisun Marsh (Suisun Marsh Plan) (Public Resources Code Sec. 32376). Three of these plans—the Delta Plan, the Suisun Marsh Plan, and the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan—are not yet completed. The Suisun Marsh Plan is in the final stages of public review and will be completed in 2011; the other two reports will be completed in 2012.

Figure 2: The Delta Cross Channel Canal, located between the towns of Locke and Walnut Grove. DWR

Because three of the plans with which the Conservancy's strategic plan must be consistent are not completed, the Conservancy has

developed this interim strategic plan to guide Conservancy operations through 2014. The plan outlines the vision, mission, and guiding principles of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy, and develops the foundation for the programs and activities to achieve its vision and mission. Program areas are defined by law (Public Resources Code 32322).

Key information presented in this interim strategic plan includes:

- An agency vision describing the Conservancy's desired outcomes
- A mission statement that reflects the charge given to the Conservancy by the State Legislature and the Governor as defined in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Act (SBX7-1)
- A set of guiding principles that establish the basis for how the Conservancy will provide its services and relate to its stakeholders
- An assessment of the external and internal conditions that will shape the Conservancy's programs. In this context, external conditions are things over which the Conservancy has input, but little control, such as state regulations, other programs, or the budget process. Internal conditions are things over which the Conservancy has input and control, such as how to spend its funds, staffing, program priorities, etc.
- A series of organizational strategies and goals that describe the steps necessary to create a successful organization
- A set of long-term goals and near-term strategies to create a sound foundation for the Conservancy's work
- A glossary of terms used in this document

The Conservancy staff created this interim strategic plan at the direction of the Strategic Plan subcommittee. Staff anticipates that the final strategic plan will be developed through an open and transparent process that includes full Board participation and public workshops. The Board must adopt the final strategic plan no later than two years after it hires the Conservancy's permanent executive officer (Public Resources Code Section 32376). The Conservancy hired its executive officer in 2011.

The Conservancy may modify the interim strategic plan as needed to adapt to new information, changed circumstances, or unanticipated events. Any modifications will be made through the Board's open, public process. The strategic plan will be reviewed periodically to determine progress, and will be revised, as necessary.

A copy of this interim strategic plan and other related information could be found at the Conservancy's website: http://www.deltaconservancy.ca.gov. CD or printed copies may also be requested by contracting the Conservancy at (916) 375-2084. Hard copies are available at our headquarter office at 3500 Industrial Blvd., West Sacramento.

About the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy

Vision

As the primary state agency to implement Delta ecosystem restoration and lead efforts that advance environmental protection and economic well-being of Delta residents, our vision is:

> ***The Conservancy leads the efforts in collaboration and cooperation with local communities and others to preserve, protect and restore the natural resources, economy, and agriculture of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun Marsh, with a particular emphasis on agriculture. Our vision is set of programs that demonstrate the complexity of economic and environmental objectives, resulting in a rich, diverse, restored, and accessible Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun Marsh.***

Because of the importance of agriculture to both the economy and the environment of the Delta, the Conservancy anticipates a particular emphasis on working agricultural landscapes.

Mission Statement

> ***Working in collaboration and cooperation with local communities, the Conservancy will lead efforts and establish partnerships to protect, preserve, enhance, and restore the Delta's environment, agriculture and working landscapes, heritage, property, regional economy, and increase opportunities for tourism and environmental education for the benefit of the Delta region, its communities, and the citizens of California.***

Delta Region Description

The Conservancy is a state agency within the California Natural Resources Agency. The Conservancy's service area is the statutory Delta and Suisun Marsh, approximately 1,300 square miles and more than 1,000 miles of levees and waterways. The Conservancy's service area is home to the largest estuary on the west coast of the Americas; is home to more than 750 species of plants and wildlife as well as 55 species of fish, and provides habitat to migratory waterfowl as part of the Pacific Flyway; and contains more than 500,000 acres of agricultural land with unique soils.

In this interim strategic plan, the term "Delta" refers to the legally defined delta (Water Code Section 12220), the Suisun Marsh, and the Yolo Bypass.

Senate Bill X 7-1 directs the Delta Protection Commission (DPC) to prepare and submit to the legislature recommendations regarding the potential expansion of, or change to, the Primary Zone of the Delta. The DPC completed its Primary Zone Study in December 2010; the study recommended some changes to the Primary and Secondary Zones. Any changes to the legal delta definition will require legislative action.

The economic base and primary land use in the Delta is agriculture. Delta agricultural lands are highly productive and Delta counties have recognized the value of the agriculture economy and have clearly delineated Delta lands for long-term agricultural use. Some agricultural lands also provide rich seasonal wildlife habitat. Thousands of acres of agricultural lands are shallowly flooded after harvest and provide feeding and resting areas for resident and migratory birds and other wildlife. This practice of seasonal flooding helps maximize the wildlife values of agricultural areas and provides agricultural benefits.

The Delta also provides numerous opportunities for recreation, such as boating, kayaking, fishing, hiking, bird watching, and hunting. The navigable waterways of the Delta are available for public access and make up the majority of current recreational activities.

What is the Delta Conservancy?

There are 10 conservancies established by California statute; the first was established in 1976. There is no overarching definition of "conservancy" in statute, and each conservancy is defined in its respective enabling legislation.

The Delta Conservancy shares some similarities with the other conservancies:

- it is concerned with preservation of natural resources, in our instance, specifically the Delta and Suisun Marsh
- it works collaboratively and cooperatively with local communities
- it may own or manage land to fulfill its mandates
- it may distribute grants to achieve its conservation mandates
- it may partner with local organizations to achieve its mandates
- may fund programs identified in the Delta Protection Commission's economic sustainability plan

The Delta Conservancy differs from the other conservancies:

- its mandate goes beyond what is traditional for conservancies, e.g., agriculture and working landscapes, legacy communities, economic vitality, and water quality
- it was not established with bond funding

The Delta Conservancy *does not:*

- develop regulations
- have the power of eminent domain

There is a rich natural and cultural heritage in the Delta. It is home to the community of Locke, the only town in the United States built by early Chinese immigrants. Other legacy communities include Bethel Island, Clarksburg, Courtland, Freeport, Hood, Isleton, Knightsen, Rio Vista, Ryde, and Walnut Grove.

California depends on the Delta as a significant source of farm products and water; the Delta supports a $4 billion economy and is traversed by energy, communications, and transportation facilities vital to the economic health of the state. As important as it is to the state, the Delta has also been described as one of the most environmentally fragile areas of the United States.

The Conservancy's service area covers part of six counties, most of which fall into five counties often collectively called the Delta Counties. The Delta Counties are Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo. A small segment of Alameda County also is in the Conservancy's service area.

Governance

The Conservancy is governed by a 23-member Board, including 11 voting members, 2 non-voting members, and 10 liaison advisors (Public Resources Code Section 32330 et seq.) The Board's chair is selected from the Delta Counties representative (Public Resources Code Section 32332). Board composition is:

Voting Members. The voting members are:

- Member or designee appointed by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
- Member or designee appointed by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors
- Member or designee appointed by the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors
- Member or designee appointed by the Solano County Board of Supervisors
- Member or designee appointed by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors
- Two public members appointed by the Governor, confirmed by the Senate
- One public member appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules
- One public member appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly
- Secretary for Natural Resources Agency or designee
- Director of Finance or designee

County Boards of Supervisors may appoint alternates to the board.

Ex-Officio (non-voting) Members. The non-voting members are:

- A member of the Senate, appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules
- A member of the Assembly, appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly

Liaison Advisors. The liaison advisors are:

- One representative from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- One representative from the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service
- One representative of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- One representative of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- A designee of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission
- A designee of the State Coastal Conservancy
- A designee of the Suisun Resource Conservation District
- A designee of the Central Valley Flood Protection Board
- A designee of the Delta Protection Commission
- A designee of the Yolo Basin Foundation

Program Description

The Delta Reform Act of 2009—of which the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Act is a part—made significant changes to the structures of various state agencies and redefined the roles that they will play in the Delta. Specifically, the legislation tasks three agencies—the Delta Protection Commission, the Delta Stewardship Council, and the Sacramento – San Joaquin Delta Conservancy—with different, yet interrelated and complementary, roles in the recovery of the Delta. The Delta Protection Commission's goal is to ensure orderly, balanced conservation and development of Delta land resources and improved flood protection. The Delta Stewardship Council is charged with developing a long-term Delta Plan that will ensure a reliable water supply balanced with establishing ecosystem restoration goals. The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy is charged with implementing ecosystem restoration and economic sustainabilty efforts in the Delta.

Delta Conservancy staff meet regularly with its sister Delta agencies to build strong partnerships, share information and strategy, coordinate policies and programs, avoid duplication of efforts, and further of all three agencies' goals and mandates.

The co-equal responsibilities of ecosystem restoration and economic sustainability in the Delta are at the heart of the Conservancy's mission, as provided by law. All the Conservancy activities are based on the principles of collaboration and cooperation with local governments and interested parties (Public Resources Code Section 32320). The Conservancy shall:

- Act as the primary state agency to implement ecosystem restoration in the Delta; and
- Lead efforts that advance environmental protection and the economic well-being of Delta residents.

Figure 3: Field workers harvest asparagus plants on Victoria Island in the South Delta. DWR

Program Areas

The statute creating the Conservancy provides for 12 specific program objectives:

- Protect and enhance habitat and habitat restoration.
- Protect and preserve Delta agriculture and working landscapes.
- Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation in the Delta.
- Promote Delta legacy communities and economic vitality in the Delta, in coordination with the Delta Protection Commission.
- Increase the resilience of the Delta to the effects of natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, in coordination with the Delta Protection Commission.
- Protect and improve water quality.

- Assist the Delta regional economy through the operation of the conservancy's program.
- Identify priority projects and initiatives for which funding is needed.
- Protect, conserve, and restore the region's physical, agricultural, cultural, historical, and living resources.
- Assist local entities in the implementation of their habitat conservation plans (HCPs) and natural community conservation plans (NCCPs).
- Facilitate take protection and safe harbor agreements under the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1531 et seq.), the California Endangered Species Act (Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 2050) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code), and the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 2800) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code) for adjacent landowners and local public agencies.
- Promote environmental education through grant funding.

Strategic Plan Process

In November 2010, the Conservancy Board appointed a subcommittee to develop its interim strategic plan to guide the Conservancy's programs, activities, and projects until a final

Things the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy May Do:

- Receive grants and other funding;
- Award grants and other funding to local government or partner agencies for projects consistent with the Conservancy's mandates;
- Develop projects and programs designed to further its purpose;
- Allocate funds to a separate program within the Conservancy for economic sustainability in the Delta;
- Collaborate, cooperate, and coordinate with interested parties to further the Conservancy's mission;
- Enter into agreements and contracts with willing participants;
- Provide technical information, expertise, program and project development and other non-financial assistance to public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and tribal organizations, in support of the Conservancy's mission and goals.

(See Appendix A for more detail regarding the Conservancy's statutory mandate and authority.)

strategic plan could be written. The subcommittee and staff held three public meetings to refine the concepts and wording of this interim strategic plan. The interim strategic plan is anticipated to be completed by February 2011. Public comment on this interim plan made in writing will be considered in preparing the final strategic plan.

This interim strategic plan will be the foundation for the Conservancy's final strategic plan.

The Board is committed to completing the final strategic plan quickly and well within the legislatively mandated deadline. The Conservancy is committed to extensive public participation in the final strategic planning process, and anticipates developing a public outreach program early in 2011.

Public outreach efforts will include workshops, presentations, and opportunities for online or electronic participation. The completion of the final strategic plan will mark the beginning of extensive and highly organized collaboration and cooperation with local, state, and federal public agencies, nonprofit organizations, local and regional land trusts, and other parties interested in advancing the Conservancy's co-equal responsibilities.

Other Key Questions. This interim strategic plan serves as the transition document for the Conservancy until it can complete its final strategic plan. As such, there are some questions that are too complex to fully address given the interim plan's accelerated schedule. Answering these key questions will help to refine the Conservancy's programs and relationships as it sets out to achieve its co-equal responsibilities. These key questions will be addressed in the final strategic plan, and will tie directly back into the long-term goals and objectives outlined in the interim strategic plan:

- As a lead agency for efforts in the Delta, what is the Conservancy's full, long-term vision for the Delta Region?
- How do we promote or fund both co-equal responsibilities at the same time?
- How do we create diverse, long-term, sustainable funding sources for the Conservancy and its programs?
- How do we identify the Conservancy's appropriate leadership role and relationship with other restoration, enhancement, and mitigation efforts and entities?
- How do we identify the Conservancy's appropriate leadership role and relationship with public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other interested parties in achieving the Conservancy's mandates?

- What are the Conservancy's criteria for identifying priority projects and for partnering with other entities, including through grants or cost-share opportunities?
- How do we ensure that conflicts arising from carrying out the Conservancy's programs are adequately heard and addressed? How do we ensure appropriate mitigation or compensation for impacts that otherwise cannot be resolved?

In the course of implementing the Conservancy's programs there will be, from time to time, instances where a particular project or program may offer significant improvement or benefit in one particular manner and may have a negative consequence in another. For example, a habitat conservation project may take land out of agricultural production; furthering one mandate (habitat protection) at the expense of another mandate (preserving Delta agriculture). When conflicts are identified the Conservancy will always seek to make decisions in a balanced and equitable fashion and conduct its business in an accessible and transparent manner. The Conservancy will work diligently, through collaboration and cooperation, to address and resolve these issues and will strive to promote programs that offer the greatest benefit and the least detriment or consequence.

Decision-Making and Monitoring

The Conservancy is committed to building collaborative and trusting relationships with local governments and other important stakeholder groups. The Conservancy also is committed to conducting its information gathering and sharing in a collaborative and open manner.

The Conservancy uses science and the best available information in its decision-making. The Conservancy will build upon existing validated data and information and identify where key gaps or weaknesses may exist

Balanced Program

The Conservancy values projects and activities that provide multiple benefits consistent with program goals and seeks to implement programs that offer a balanced approach. For the Conservancy's purposes a balanced program is a program that

- promotes both co-equal responsibilities,
- ensures that programs and projects are funded, disbursed, and distributed in a geographically balanced manner,
- takes both benefits and costs, financial and otherwise, into consideration, and
- promotes partnerships with and engages the participation of Delta residents, community groups, organizations, industries, and local, state, and federal agencies.

in order to further its mission and vision.

A future role for the Conservancy may include research and monitoring activities on projects and programs that support its mission, even those not initiated by the Conservancy, when project originators want to partner with the Conservancy for those services. The information gathered as part of the research and monitoring activities would be an integral part of the adaptive management and decision-making process for policy-makers and project originators alike. (Adaptive management is a flexible decision-making process using ongoing information gathering and evaluation to modify or revise management plans or specific actions based on the new information.)

Agency Funding Sources

The Conservancy's budget for staff and basic operational needs consists of funding from the State General Fund. At this time, this is the only source of funds the Conservancy has for its program, and these funds only cover staffing and administration costs. The Conservancy does have $500,000 in reimbursable authority, which gives the Conservancy authority to spend this amount if it can find the money from a source other than the General Fund. Other sources could include special funds, grants or loans from other state or federal agencies or from private sources. Currently, the Conservancy is investigating additional funding sources to develop and carry out its programs and partnerships.

The Conservancy's ability to accomplish its mission and mandates is directly related to its success in securing funding from the Legislature and other sources. Currently, the Conservancy has no funding for its programs, and may be able to secure additional, but limited, funding in the next three years. The Conservancy will need to set its priorities based on its limited funding in areas where it can be most successful.

One long-term option for additional Conservancy funding is the *Safe, Clean, Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act of 2010* (SBX7-2) a general obligation bond proposal deferred to the 2012 ballot. As of December 2010, this Act would authorize $11.1 billion to finance a safe drinking water and water supply reliability program. The Conservancy potentially would receive funding from this bond; however, there is no certainty that the bond will be on the 2012 ballot or that it will succeed at the polls. Currently, there is a possibility that the bond proposal *could* be rewritten. Given the uncertainty about the water bond, the Conservancy is prudently seeking funding from other sources while developing tentative plans in case the bond funding does materialize.

The Conservancy may pursue and accept funds from various sources, including, but not limited to, federal, state, and local funds or grants, gifts, donations, bequests, devises, subventions, grants, rents, royalties, or other assistance from funds from public

and private sources. The Conservancy may also accept fees levied by others, or create and manage endowments (Public Resources Code Section 32372). At this point, various funding proposals are being considered, including developing partnerships with agencies that benefit from the Conservancy's activities.

The Conservancy may provide financial assistance to local public agencies and nonprofit organizations through a grants program. The Conservancy may also provide technical assistance—as a form of cost-sharing—with local public agencies and nonprofit organizations.

The Conservancy is dedicated to making its funding decisions in a balanced manner to meet its program priorities.

Figure 4: View of habitat restoration done to the tip of Decker Island. DWR

Conservancy Guiding Principles

This section lists the core values and philosophies describing how the Conservancy conducts itself in pursing its mission. These include:

Our Key Objectives

- To be a leader in building trust between Delta residents and interested parties as it develops programs to meet its co-equal responsibilities of ecosystem restoration and economic sustainability for its service area.
- To be a leader in fostering and encouraging partnerships with Delta residents, local landowners, and other interested parties to mutually increase our respective abilities to achieve the Conservancy's mission and goals.
- To build upon existing local government and regional efforts (including state and federal programs) to make progress on achieving the Conservancy's mission.
- To lead collaboration and coordination among local communities and governments, state and federal agencies, and other interested parties in Delta ecosystem restoration efforts.
- To lead collaboration and coordination among local communities and governments, state and federal agencies, and other interested parties in Delta economic sustainability, agriculture, and working landscape efforts.
- To establish a culture of working together towards cooperative solutions and valuing the diversity of all communities that care about the Delta.
- To commit to providing an open forum and assure an equal opportunity for everyone who wants to participate in the Conservancy's activities.
- To facilitate public information and education throughout the region and the state as to the important contributions the Delta provides to all Californians, including providing some water to two-thirds of the state, access to recreation and tourism, and the production of a variety of important agricultural products.

Implementing Our Programs

- To establish program priorities as the primary ecosystem restoration agent which consider the concerns of local, regional, and state stakeholders, through program and organizational flexibility.
- To strive to identify and implement activities that result in integrated environmental, economic, and social benefits rather than "either/or" outcomes.
- To maximize the public resource benefits and cost-effectiveness of our programs by securing services from both the private and public sector, and by using market-based approaches to generate revenues that are reinvested in our programs, where appropriate.
- To use science and the best available information in making decisions, identifying opportunities, and initiating and building upon Conservancy programs and projects.

How We Operate

- We are committed to innovation and to adapting to new information and situations.
- We are committed to seeking knowledge from others and to sharing what we have learned through our educational and communication activities.
- We are committed to attracting, developing and sustaining a competent, creative, and productive workforce to help the Conservancy meet its co-equal responsibilities.
- We are committed to being professional, courteous, responsive, ethical, and helpful in our dealings with each other and with people outside the Conservancy.
- We are committed to conducting operations openly. Decision-making will be transparent, and we strive to improve communications throughout the region.
- We are committed to developing program priorities that consider the input received through community outreach efforts and will seek balanced solutions that incorporate mitigation or compensation for unavoidable impacts, recognizing local and regional differences, through program and organizational flexibility.

Agency Assessment

The Conservancy came into existence on February 3, 2010. As a new organization, the Conservancy needs to create strategies and actions that recognize the many factors that support or create barriers to achieving its co-equal responsibilities. As the interim strategic plan is revised, more formal tools such as SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats) analysis can be used to identity external and internal conditions that could impact the Conservancy's ability to fulfill its mission. In this context, external conditions are things over which the Conservancy has input, but little control, such as state regulations, other programs, or the budget process. Internal conditions are things over which the Conservancy has input and control, such as how to spend the money, staffing, program priorities, etc.

The following assessment summarizes existing information from several sources. The Conservancy anticipates refining this section through public forums.

External Assessments

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is the largest estuary in the western United States and is formed by the confluence of the State's two largest rivers: the Sacramento River and the San Joaquin River. This confluence is unique because the respective river deltas merge into an inland delta. The Delta-Suisun is the major source of California's water supply and an ecological treasure, as well as the intersection of a variety of businesses, transportation corridors, utilities, and recreation. There are four interstate freeways, three state highways, three major rail lines, and two shipping ports located within the Delta.

Home to more than half a million people, and surrounded by over 1,100 miles of levees, the Delta is comprised of 5 counties (Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo), 5 major cities, and 14 towns or villages. It also serves as the major hub of California's water supply, channeling water from Northern California's watersheds to two-thirds of the state's households and millions of acres of southern Central Valley farmlands. In addition, the Delta's rich peat soil supports the state's multi-billion dollar agricultural economy. Specific Delta crops include corn, grain, hay, alfalfa, tomatoes, asparagus, pears, and wine grapes. Certain specialty crops, such as asparagus, are grown in the Delta in quantities unmatched anywhere else in the United States. The Delta's economic value to the state has been estimated at approximately $3.5 billion.

The Delta, particularly the Suisun Marsh, is a key link in the Pacific Flyway, the major north-south migration route for birds on the West Coast. The Delta is also home to critical habitat for more than 750 animal and plant species and many non-native species,

including waterfowl, birds of prey, sport fish and species listed as threatened or endangered.

The Delta provides a set of environmental and economic services whose benefits extend well beyond its borders. Those services include:

- Land uses (agricultural, urban, and conservation)
- Flood management
- Ecosystem services
- Water supply
- Water quality management and discharges
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Recreation and Tourism
- Local and state economies

Although increasingly well-studied, the Delta is a dynamic and complex natural, economic, and institutional system. This complexity and dynamism, along with ongoing data gaps, creates uncertainties and compounds existing challenges. The services the Delta provides are interrelated, and there are conflicts within the system, especially between the ecosystem and water supply. All of the area's services depend on the levee system.

Listed below are some key points about the Delta:

- The predominant land uses in the Delta is agriculture and in the Suisun Marsh it is wetland conservation.
- Provisions in the Delta Protection Act and the Suisun Marsh Preservation Act limit urban growth, and the Delta is surrounded by some of the fastest growing areas in California.

Figure 5: Cattails and marsh plants line the banks of Twitchell Island. DWR

- The Delta has about 500,000 acres of highly productive farmland; about 40,000 acres of Delta agricultural land use was converted to urban and conservation uses between 1990 and 2004.
- The Delta lies at or below sea level, and the great majority of Delta lands are protected from flooding by levees. Most of these levees are locally built and maintained and subject to varying risks of failure.
- Citing anticipated increases in sea level and other levee risks, the US Army Corps of Engineers decided not to set a "base flood elevation" for the Delta, a decision that highlights the flood risk in the Delta and impacts decision-making by both local governments and landowners.

More than 10 percent of California's remaining wetlands are in the Suisun Marsh, which is an important wintering and nesting area for waterfowl of the Pacific Flyway.

The Delta is considered among the most at-risk ecosystems in the United States.

About 2/3 of Californians get some portion of their drinking water from the Delta; 87 percent of the municipal water used in the East Bay Area is either diverted or transported across the Delta; and almost 2.5 million acres of agricultural land outside of the Delta are irrigated with exported water.

Water quality in the Delta can be negatively affected by upstream discharges, in-Delta discharges, water exported from the Delta, and seawater intrusion. The Delta is managed to control salinity.

In addition to being a water supply hub, the Delta is a transportation hub intersected by highways, shipping channels, airways, and rail lines. The Sacramento and Stockton ports are key to goods movement in the state.

The Delta is also intersected by a variety of utilities such as electrical transmission lines, natural gas pipelines, petroleum pipelines, and water pipelines that serve Californians throughout the state.

Recreation and tourism in the Delta is mostly water-based, primarily in the forms of fishing and boating. Other activities include waterfowl and upland game bird hunting, wildlife viewing, bird watching, and photography. Recreational opportunities will expand with the completion of the Great California Delta Trails initiative; eco-tourism and agri-tourism also will increase tourism opportunities in the Delta.

The Delta is home to more than 500,000 people and 250,000 jobs, and contributes more than $35 billion to the state's economy. Infrastructure replacement costs in potentially flooded areas could reach $40 billion or more.

External Challenges. A great deal of political and public attention has been focused on the Delta over the years. The recent round of this attention led to the creation of the Conservancy.

The scale, scope, and complexity of resources, funding, and institutional needs exceed the current capacity of existing programs in the both public and private sector. This presents many challenges to Delta residents, interested parties, and the state as they try to address the natural resources and community needs. The following is a list of some of the institutional and resource challenges facing the Conservancy and its service area:

Institutional Challenges	Resource Challenges
• Lack of funding • Need to determine priorities based on existing staff levels • Conflicting objectives and timelines regarding Delta efforts • Conveying clear identity and role of Delta Conservancy • Few Californians understand the significance of the Delta • As a result of current economy, hiring freezes and state-imposed cost saving measures impact the Conservancy's ability to carry out its programs • Lack of trust between stakeholders at the local, state, and federal level • Funding should reflect the full suite of responsibilities entrusted to the Conservancy	• Extensive urbanization within and adjacent to the Conservancy's service area • Increased demand on existing water supplies • The challenge of maintaining the Delta economy in light of changing state and national policies • Impaired water quality • Adverse effects on land and water species and their habitat, many of which already face declining health and numbers • Adverse effects in the Delta from invasive plant and animal species • Significant risk in the Delta from floods and potential earthquakes • Potential loss of historical and cultural character of communities • Adverse impacts of climate change, sea level rise, and subsidence on natural resources, watersheds, and local economies in the Delta • Potential impacts from Conservancy-led measures on agricultural production

Consistency With Other Delta Planning Efforts. The Conservancy will take a leadership role in collaborating and coordinating efforts to ensure our strategic plan is consistent with at least five other plans (Public Resources Code Sec. 32376). To ensure the success of the Conservancy's programs, the Conservancy will also lead collaborating and coordinating efforts to be consistent with the general plans and habitat conservation plans of the Delta counties as well as other documents, such as the Delta Protection Commission's economic sustainability plan. The Conservancy acknowledges that its interim strategic plan, like county general plans, are evolving documents that need to incorporate new information as conditions warrant. Funds provided to the Conservancy to implement ecosystem restoration projects pursuant to the Bay Delta Conservation Plan shall only be used for ecosystem restoration purposes (Public Resources Code Sec. 32360(3)).

The Conservancy will partner with other agencies or be the primary agency carrying out several of the ecosystem

Conservancy and Climate Change

One key—and potentially controversial—issue for the Conservancy's final strategic plan will be how to address the effects of climate change and climate change-related policies on the Conservancy's programs. Data suggest that the state has already experienced a small rise in sea level, and the overwhelming scientific consensus is that the rate of rise will accelerate significantly over coming decades. In addition, the state is projected to experience increases in average temperatures, increasingly severe storms, more frequent major droughts, and reduced snowpack and overall water availability.

Policy responses at the state level focus on reducing net emissions of global warming gasses, on encouraging the "sequestration" of carbon, and on adapting to the consequences of the degree of climate change to which we are already committed.

For the Delta as a whole, climate change presents a challenge and potential opportunity. The uncertainty about future climate makes land use and public safety planning and decision making challenging and at times, difficult. Opportunities exist for new markets, technology, and methods of addressing future uncertainty. The Conservancy has a role in assisting the Delta in the areas of mitigation (helping Delta agricultural and business operations become more energy efficient); sequestration (facilitating where possible the participation of Delta landowners in income-producing sequestration); and adaption. Of these, the Conservancy's assistance in adaptation to future climate-related policies is likely to be the most significant.

restoration or economic sustainability activities proposed under these various plans. The Conservancy will take a lead role in shaping the ecosystem restoration section of the Delta Plan and will observe, track, and make comments—as appropriate—on other ecosystem plans. The five plans with which the Conservancy's interim strategic plan must be consistent are:

- Delta Plan, by the Delta Stewardship Council, due January 1, 2012;
- Land Use and Resource Management Plan, by the Delta Protection Commission, updated 2010;
- Central Valley Flood Protection Plan, by the California Department of Water Resources, due by January 1, 2012;
- Suisun Marsh Preservation Act of 1977; and
- Habitat Management, Preservation and Restoration Plan for the Suisun Marsh (Suisun Marsh Plan), by the Suisun Charter Group. The public review draft was released in November 2010.

The Conservancy's staff is completing an initial inventory of proposed actions under these plans, as they are available, and will analyze how those proposed actions could fit within the Conservancy's interim strategic plan.

Figure 7: Delta sunset. Jyo Muroyama, used with permission

Internal Assessment

The Conservancy is mandated to serve a broad range of purposes. To develop effective programs and set priorities, the Conservancy will initiate engagement with the local government agencies, Delta residents, state and federal governments, and interested parties to develop partnerships and outreach. Communication with stakeholders is critical for the success of the Conservancy and will adhere to the principles of building trust and building upon existing efforts to achieve its co-equal responsibilities.

Large area. The Conservancy's service area includes approximately 1,300 square miles and more than 1,000 miles of levees and waterways in parts of six counties. Headquarters for the Conservancy must be in the legal Delta (as defined in Water Code Section 12220). This creates transportation, communication, and operational challenges. An effective organizational response will require thoughtful use of the Conservancy's resources and a commitment to on-going communication with the public and all partners.

Complex Institutional Setting. The Conservancy operates in a complex institutional setting. There are more than 200 entities with some jurisdiction in the Delta, including special districts. Given the number and diversity in Delta interests, conflicts are inevitable. The Conservancy intends to take a leadership role in identifying conflicts as well as facilitating resolutions or solutions within the full suite of its co-equal responsibilities. The Conservancy is committed to working to address the concerns of people who are impacted by its actions. The diversity of the Conservancy's board and agency liaison advisers will be an asset in this respect going forward.

Program Diversity. The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Act lists 12 program areas for which the Conservancy is responsible. The complexity involved in developing programs for these 12 areas is matched by the complexity of the Delta system itself. Whatever else the Delta may be, it is not a place where a "one size fits all" approach will work.

As the Delta region experiences change—as all regions within California are—it is important for the Conservancy to maintain as much flexibility in its approach as possible. The Conservancy believes that initiating and developing partnerships is a good way of maintaining that flexibility while still dealing with its program diversity.

One way the Conservancy sees its partnership role is to receive and provide grants to other agencies. Should the Water Bond be enacted in 2012, the Conservancy will have millions of dollars to distribute through a grants program. Should the Water Bond not

be enacted, the Conservancy will use the partnerships to pursue federal government and private grant funding.

Emphasizing Collaboration and Cooperation. The Conservancy is committed to working collaboratively and cooperatively with Delta residents, all levels of government, and a variety of partners, including non-governmental organizations and private landowners. The Conservancy will consult with city or county governments where grant money will be spent and coordinate with appropriate state agencies (Public Resources Code Section 32363).

Integral to the success of the Conservancy will be its partnerships with local, state, federal, and non-governmental entities. Some partnerships are mentioned in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Act, such as with the 10 liaison member agencies and the Delta Stewardship Council. Other partnerships will evolve over time as the Conservancy refines its role and identifies project priorities and opportunities.

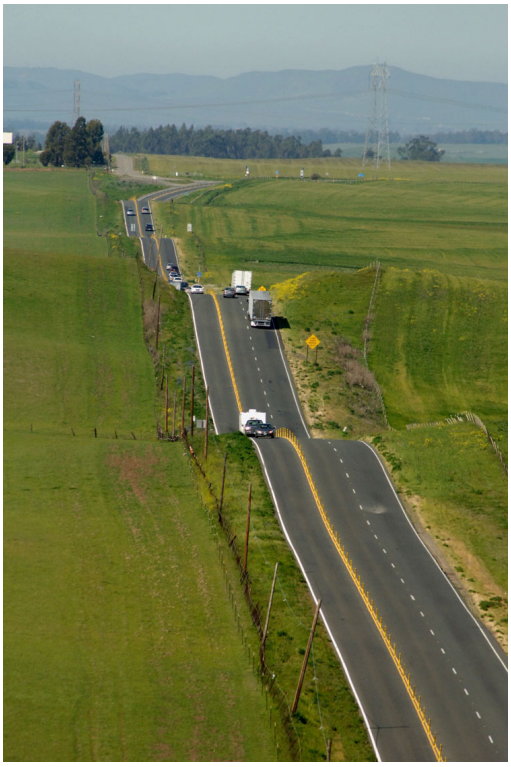

Figure 8: Highway 12 is a busily traveled road and the main artery from Highway 80/Suisun City, through Rio Vista and on to Interstate 5. DWR

Conservancy's Three-Year Organizational Strategic Goals

During the next three years, the Conservancy will work to build an effective infrastructure to carry out its mission, to develop strategies, and to set priorities for decision making on projects and site-specific activities. To carry out its mission, the Conservancy will focus on key organizational areas:

- Create an effective organization
- Implement a balanced program
- Identify funding needs and sources
- Increase knowledge and capacity
- Use and share best available information

Organizational Goal 1: Create an effective organization

Less than a year old, the Conservancy is defining its key purposes, functions, and project goals and developing an organizational structure to support those. It hired staff; adopted rules, administrative regulations, and guidelines for Conservancy operations; and designed organizational management structure. It is in the process of establishing a permanent headquarters site.

The Conservancy's organization structure emphasizes teamwork and flexibility. It addresses the challenges of serving a large and diverse area where long-standing, conflicting goals prevail and is committed to forming partnership with other governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, and interested local parties.

The Conservancy does not supersede local or regional efforts; instead, its efforts are to emphasize community interaction and build upon and enhance existing infrastructure.

Long-Term Objectives

- To be a leader in building trust between Delta residents and interested parties as it develops programs to meet its co-equal responsibilities of ecosystem restoration and economic sustainability for its service area.
- To be a leader in fostering and encouraging partnerships with Delta residents, local landowners, and other interested parties to mutually increase our respective abilities to achieve the Conservancy's mission and goals.

- To establish a culture of working together towards cooperative solutions and valuing the diversity of all communities that care about the Delta.
- To commit to providing an open forum and assure an equal opportunity for everyone who wants to participate in the Conservancy's activities.

Strategies to Support Organizational Goal 1

Strategy 1.1: Ensure an open and transparent decision-making process by adopting understandable rules, guidelines, and procedures for the Conservancy's business.

Strategy 1.2: Initiate a robust public outreach and feedback program within the region and in the state's metropolitan areas important to the success of the Conservancy's programs.

Strategy 1.3: Initiate and maintain an active role as a key partner in the development and implementation of the Delta Plan and the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan.

Organizational Goal 2: Implement a balanced program

The Conservancy values projects and activities that provide multiple benefits consistent with program goals. For the Conservancy, a balanced program means a fair distribution of costs and benefits between its co-equal responsibilities and the geographic distribution of its projects. It will lead the collaboration and cooperation efforts with others to identify and integrate the environmental, economic, and social needs of the often times conflicting goals and desired outcomes of the various Delta-focused constituencies.

The Conservancy will make every effort, over time, to allocate resources and activities equitably across the Conservancy's service area. Even so, in the initial years of operations, the diversity, complexity, and uniqueness of the Delta may create challenges in achieving this objective. Funding limitations and restrictions may also present challenges in achieving this objective.

Where there is unavoidable impact the Conservancy will mitigate or compensate the community, landowner, industry, or other entity that may be affected. Mitigation or compensation may come in the form of financial assistance, in kind services, implementation of programs that assist the affected parties, or other means that have yet to be identified or defined.

The Conservancy will continue to identify efforts and activities with Delta-wide applications and benefit. This may include communication efforts that include information collection and dissemination.

Long-Term Objectives

- To build upon existing local government and regional efforts (including state and federal programs) to make progress on achieving the Conservancy's mission.
- To lead collaboration and coordination among local communities and governments, state and federal agencies, and other interested parties in Delta ecosystem restoration efforts.

Strategies to Support Organizational Goal 2

Strategy 2.1: Recognize the need to act based on opportunity, available funding, and regional differences or statewide interest, when appropriate.

Strategy 2.2: Continuously refine regional and Delta-wide priority setting processes, consistent with the statute, to guide staff and the Board in decision-making.

Organizational Goal 3: Identify funding needs and sources

Adequate and stable funding sources are essential to fully implement this interim strategic plan. The Conservancy understands that funding from any one source may be limited, inconsistent, and restricted in use; governmental funding is contingent upon appropriation and authority to spend granted by either the Legislature or Congress. The Conservancy is dedicated to securing adequate and stable funding from a variety of sources—including grants, endowments, or fees—to carry out its co-equal responsibilities. Strategies identified later in this interim strategic plan will guide how available funds will be used.

Figure 9: Grain is harvested at a farm in the Delta.

Long-Term Objectives

- Secure permanent, diverse, long-term, sustainable funding that will enable the Conservancy to implement all elements of its mandate.

Strategies to Support Organizational Goal 3

Strategy 3.1: Develop and communicate funding needs to the public, partners, and decision makers at all levels.

Strategy 3.2: Leverage and improve funding options and opportunities by identifying and communicating potential funding sources to those engaged in project activities consistent with the Conservancy's mission.

Strategy 3.3: Identify and secure additional opportunities for stable, permanent, and long-term funding sources for the Conservancy, including but not limited to governmental sources of funding or establishing an endowment.

Strategy 3.4: Examine ways beneficiaries of the Delta Plan can contribute financing to the Conservancy's projects to meet its co-equal responsibilities.

Strategy 3.5: Seek funding for an agriculture and economic development fund.

Organizational Goal 4: Increase knowledge and capacity

The Delta communities have a rich history of self-sufficiency and resourcefulness. Many local activities, consistent with the Conservancy's mission, are underway. The Conservancy will identify and build upon these efforts and assist communities in completing their efforts by providing information, technical assistance, financial, or other resources.

The Conservancy recognizes that its goals and activities must be flexible and includes an effective communication component to address the wide variety of regional issues and concerns, and to adapt to new information or situations. Education efforts, demonstration projects, and research and monitoring activities designed to increase knowledge will continue to be encouraged and supported.

Long-Term Objectives:

- To be a leader in building trust between Delta residents and interested parties.
- To be a leader in fostering and encouraging partnerships with Delta residents, local landowners, and other interested parties.
- To establish a culture of working together towards cooperative solutions and valuing the diversity of all communities that care about the Delta.
- To commit to providing an open forum and assure an equal opportunity for everyone who wants to participate in the Conservancy's activities.

Strategies to Support Organization Goal 4

Strategy 4.1: Determine existing and potential regional and community education, shared learning, and research projects that the Conservancy can support and enhance.

Strategy 4.2: Assist in identifying demonstration projects or other projects, such as signage or grant opportunities, and develop partnerships to address those needs and resolve issues.

Strategy 4.3: Assist, in an advisory capacity, Delta communities on achieving, obtaining necessary information, or resolving conflicts for their habitat conservation plans or natural community conservation plans.

Organizational Goal 5: Use and share science and best available information

The Conservancy will base its decisions on science and the best available information by engaging, compiling, synthesizing, analyzing, and sharing existing data.

Numerous governmental agencies, non-governmental entities, educational institutions, and individuals develop and maintain information that could inform the Conservancy's decision making. In many instances, this information is not readily available to others. The Conservancy will lead collaboration with these entities to determine information needs and define ways to make the best available information easily available to interested parties.

The Conservancy will identify and incorporate as much existing data as possible into its information collection and dissemination efforts. The Conservancy also proposes to

engage community leaders and others in defining information priorities, data gaps, and dissemination methods.

To promote the Delta and the Conservancy's programs, the Conservancy will make information as widely available as possible, using multiple avenues ranging from personal contact to Internet features to other emerging technologies.

Long-Term Objectives:

- To build upon existing local government and regional efforts (including state and federal programs) to make progress on achieving the Conservancy's mission.
- To lead collaboration and coordination among local communities and governments, state and federal agencies, and other interested parties in Delta ecosystem restoration efforts.
- To lead collaboration and coordination among local communities and governments, state and federal agencies, and other interested parties in Delta economic sustainability, agriculture, and working landscape efforts.
- To commit to providing an open forum and assure an equal opportunity for everyone who wants to participate in the Conservancy's activities.
- To encourage participation in public information and education throughout the region and the state about the important contributions the Delta provides to all Californians, including providing some water to two-thirds of the state, access to recreation and tourism, and the production of a variety of important agricultural products.

Strategies to Support Organizational Goal 5

Strategy 5.1: Identify sources of existing information relevant to the Conservancy's mission and mandates.

Strategy 5.2: Assess and share with partners information to promote decision-making that is consistent with the Conservancy's mission and mandates.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Conservancy Act

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Act (Public Resources Code Section 32322) lists the mandates upon which our goals and objectives are based. Below are the 12 mandates:

- Protect and enhance habitat and habitat restoration
- Protect and preserve Delta agriculture and working landscapes
- Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation in the Delta
- Promote Delta legacy communities and economic vitality in the Delta, in coordination with the Delta Protection Commission
- Increase the resilience of the Delta to the effects of natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, in coordination with the Delta Protection Commission
- Protect and improve water quality
- Assist the Delta regional economy through the operation of the Conservancy's programs
- Identify priority projects and initiatives for which funding is needed
- Protect, conserve, and restore the region's physical, agricultural, cultural, historical, and living resources
- Assist local entities in the implementation of their habitat conservation plans (HCPs) and natural community conservation plans (NCCPs)
- Facilitate take protection and safe harbor agreements under the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1531 et seq.), the California Endangered Species Act (Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 2050) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code), and the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 2800) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code) for adjacent landowners and local public agencies
- Promote environmental education through grant funding

Conservancy's Long-Term Goals and Near-Term Strategies

The Conservancy's mandates are ambitious and will only be accomplished over time, with strong and committed partnerships, clear priorities, and adequate and dedicated funding. As a new agency, the Conservancy is laying the groundwork for its success in achieving its mandates. To assist in laying the groundwork for success, the Conservancy developed four long-term goals with objectives for this interim strategic plan, based on the state legislative mandates. The ideas in this interim strategic plan are the initial efforts at identifying what needs to be done in the near-term (next three years) and are not exhaustive or a complete list of everything that may need to be done. The near-term strategies reflect what the Conservancy believes it can reasonably do in the transition period between this interim strategic plan and the final strategic plan to address these goals and objectives.

Long-Term Goal: Support efforts that advance and protect agriculture in the Delta and the economic well being of Delta residents.

Long-Term Objectives:

- Protect and preserve Delta agriculture and working landscapes
- Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation
- Assist the Delta regional economy through the operation of the Conservancy's programs
- Protect, conserve, and restore the region's physical, agricultural, cultural, historical, and living resources
- Promote Delta legacy communities and economic vitality in the Delta in coordination with the Delta Protection Commission

Near-Term Strategies:

1. Develop a climate change and sea level rise policy for the Conservancy, as required by state policy. Evaluate opportunities to assist Delta communities to adapt to the effects of climate change and sea level rise.
2. Develop criteria, in addition to willing sellers provisions, by which the Conservancy will pursue, fund, partner with willing landowners, or agree to land ownership or land management responsibilities in the Delta to protect and preserve agriculture and working landscapes. Where appropriate, the

Conservancy will pursue grants to assist others in protecting and preserving agriculture and working landscapes.

3. Develop best management principles for agricultural and working landscapes management for potential Conservancy-owned or managed lands and identify willing landowners to develop demonstration projects using those principles.
4. Meet with other state agencies and local agencies to determine what outreach and technical assistance the Conservancy could provide regarding a multitude of topics, including but not limited to: agriculture and biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and economic policies, assist with grower's adaptation to climate change or sea level rise, and opportunities to promote agri-tourism.
5. Develop partnerships with the Delta Protection Commission, the Department of Parks and Recreation, local agencies, and local landowners and business people to facilitate private-public collaboration in promoting Delta-based recreation and establishing methods to minimize impacts to private landowners from increased

Figure 10: Discovery Bay, located in the south Delta near Highway 4, features a waterfront community. DWR

recreational use of the Delta's public lands and waterways.

6. Seek participation from and work with local landowners, business people, and Delta residents as well as the Delta Protection Commission, Governor's Office of Economic Development, California Department of Food and Agriculture, and other state agencies and local entities to prioritize and implement actions derived from DPC's completed economic sustainability plan, due in July 2011.

Long-Term Goal: Act as the primary state agency to implement eco-system restoration in the Delta.

Long-Term Objectives:

- Protect and enhance habitat and undertake habitat restoration
- Assist local entities in the implementation of their habitat conservation plans (HCPs) and natural community conservation plans (NCCPs)
- Facilitate take protections and safe harbor agreements for adjacent landowners and local public agencies

Near-Term Strategies:

1. Seek participation from local groups, and state and federal agencies to develop the criteria by which the Conservancy will determine priority projects that are consistent with the Conservancy's mission and mandates.
2. Serve as a clearinghouse of information regarding existing Delta habitat restoration and enhancement efforts, including agriculture and working landscapes.
3. Lead the efforts in shaping the ecosystem section of the Delta Plan and participate in other ecosystem restoration processes in anticipation of being the primary state agency to implement ecosystem restoration in the Delta.
4. Identify, establish partnerships, and participate in existing Delta habitat restoration and enhancement efforts,

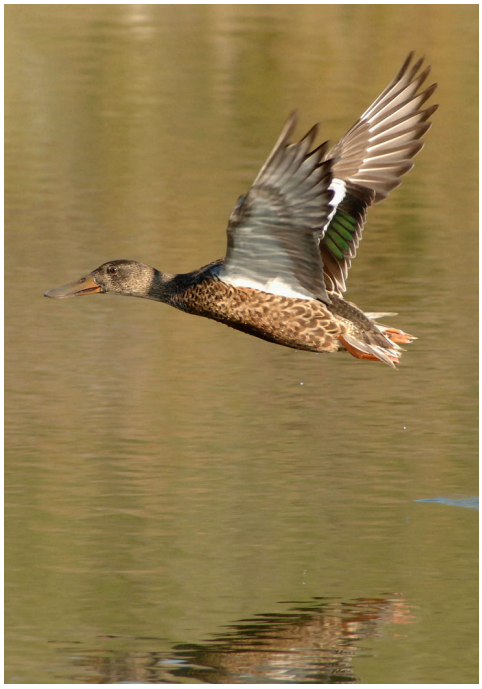

Figure 11: Ducks are among the waterfowl that inhabit the Delta. DWR

including assistance to local entities with implementing their HCPs or NCCPs.

5. Establish opportunities to facilitate take protections and safe harbor agreements that could include developing a permit streamlining process, workshops, or other processes to assist local landowners and local public agencies.
6. Develop criteria by which the Conservancy will pursue, fund, partner with willing landowners and land trusts, or agree to land ownership or land management responsibilities in the Delta to restore, protect, or enhance ecosystem services and habitat. Where appropriate, the Conservancy will pursue grants to assist others restoring, protecting, or enhancing ecosystem services and habitat.

Long-Term Goal: Identify and secure adequate funding to carry out the Conservancy's mission and mandates

Long-Term Objectives:

- Identify priority projects and initiatives for which funding is needed for all mandated areas
- Identify and pursue public and private sources of potential funding for priority projects and initiatives in all mandated areas
- Identify and secure other sources of funding from partner agencies (e.g., Prop. 84)

Near-Term Strategies:

1. Prepare the Conservancy's grant funding criteria and protocols to receive and distribute grants in anticipation of potential bond funding, federal funding, or other funding.
2. Work with partner agencies, local entities, nonprofit organizations, and interested parties to identify projects and initiatives that meet the Conservancy's criteria for priority projects and grant funding.
3. Contact, assist, and provide appropriate information to public and private sources of potential funding for priority projects and initiatives that further the Conservancy's mission and mandates (e.g., grants, endowments, etc.)
4. Work with the Governor's Office, the California Natural Resources Agency and its member departments, other state or federal agencies, and the Legislature and Congress to secure funding for Conservancy activities and operation.
5. Identify and develop funding sources for agriculture and working landscapes protection and preservation. Pursue developing a separate fund for agriculture

and working landscapes protection and preservation consistent with the Conservancy's mission and mandates.

Long-Term Goal: Identify and establish partnerships with interested parties to further the Conservancy's mission and mandates, including educating and advocating for the Delta as a unique natural and significant economic resource.

Long-Term Objectives:

- Increase the resilience of the Delta to the effects of natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, in coordination with the Delta Protection Commission
- Promote environmental education through grant funding
- Provide outreach to protect and improve water quality

Near-Term Strategies:

1. Attend and participate in regional flood management planning efforts, such as the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan meetings.
2. Develop a recommendation regarding an environmental education grants program in anticipation of securing funding.
3. Assist Delta residents and local entities in identifying, promoting, and communicating water quality needs and issues in the California Water Plan process.
4. Attend and participate in regional flood management planning efforts, such as Central Valley Flood Protection Plan and Delta Multi Hazard Mitigation Task Force meetings.
5. Support efforts by Delta residents and stakeholders to encourage the State to adopt standards for levels of protection afforded by levees of different design and determine allowable land uses in areas flooded when levees fail.
6. Support efforts to coordinate and execute an emergency disaster planning exercise in the Delta.

Next Steps

This interim strategic plan is meant to begin the process of defining the role of the Conservancy in the larger Delta context and its near-term strategies to achieve its co-equal responsibilities. The ideas in this interim strategic plan are the initial efforts at identifying what needs to be done in the near-term (next three years) and are not exhaustive or a complete list of everything that may need to be done.

This interim plan will be presented to the full Conservancy Board for its consideration at its January 19, 2011, meeting. Future revisions to this document will depend upon the outcome at that meeting.

The strategic planning process will continue toward completing a final strategic plan within the legislatively-mandated deadline, and the Board is committed to completing the final strategic plan quickly. The Conservancy is committed to public participation throughout this process, and public outreach efforts are likely to include workshops, presentations, and opportunities for online or electronic participation.

As part of the final strategic plan process, the next steps for the Conservancy include addressing and answering the key questions listed earlier in this document. Foremost among those questions is determining the Conservancy's role as a potential landowner in the Delta.

Figure 12: Yolo Bypass provides flood protection and wildlife habitat. Dave Feliz, used with permission.

Acknowledgements

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The Conservancy thanks photographers Dave Feliz with the Yolo Basin Foundation, Jyo Muroyama, Michael Pieretti, and the photographers from the California Department of Water Resources for their permission to use their images for this report.

Glossary

Adaptive management: a framework and flexible decision-making process of ongoing knowledge acquisition, monitoring, and evaluation leading to continuous improvement in management planning and project implementation to achieve specified objectives.

Balanced program: a fair distribution of costs and benefits between the Conservancy's co-equal responsibilities and the geographic distribution of its projects.

Conservancy: 1) a body concerned with the preservation of nature, specific species, or natural resources including agriculture, e.g., the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy; 2) the conservation of something, especially wildlife and the environment, in particular: preservation, protection, or restoration of the natural environment, natural ecosystems, vegetation, and wildlife; preservation, repair, and prevention of deterioration if archaeological, historical, and cultural sites and artifacts; and prevention of excessive or wasteful use of a resource.

Delta: The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, as defined in Water Code Section 12220, the Suisun Marsh, and the Yolo Bypass.

Flood Protection: Structural and nonstructural methods of mitigating, avoiding, or reducing flooding hazards or risks.

Good Neighbor Policies: Policies to avoid negative impacts on agricultural land as a result of habitat enhancements. The goals of these policies are to assist in avoiding negative impacts, addressing and resolving unavoidable impacts, and fostering good communication and relationships among neighbors and communities. These policies may also include establishing safe harbor agreements that, among other things, limit liability for incidental take associated with agricultural and recreational activities adjacent to wildlife lands.

Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs): Planning documents required by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for an incidental take permit under the federal Endangered Species Act. Incidental take permits are required if a proposed activity would result in the death of or injury ("incidental take") to a listed wildlife species. HCPs describe the anticipated effects of the proposed taking, how those impacts will be minimized or mitigated, and how the HCP is to be funded.

Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs): NCCPs identify and provide for the regional or area-wide protection of plants, animals, and their habitats, while allowing

compatible and appropriate economic activity. The primary objective of the NCCP is to conserve natural communities at the ecosystem level while accommodating compatible land use.

Pacific Flyway: A major north-south route of travel for migratory birds in the Americas, extending from Alaska to Patagonia. Every year, migratory birds travel some or all of this distance both in spring and in fall, following food sources, heading to breeding grounds, or travelling to overwintering sites. The Delta, Suisun Marsh, and Yolo Bypass are part of the Pacific Flyway.

Suisun Marsh: The largest brackish marsh on the west coast of the United States. The marsh is immediately west of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and is also a part of the San Francisco Bay estuary. It includes 116,000 acres of bays, sloughs, tidal marsh, diked-managed wetlands, seasonal marshes, lowland grasslands, upland grasslands, and cultivated lands.

Sustainability: the capacity to endure; in this document, sustainable/sustainability refers to plans or actions that help to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainabile agriculture: A sustainable agriculture is one tht, over the long term, enhances environmental quality and the resource base on which agriculture depends; provides for basic human food and fiber needs; is economically viable, and enhances the quality oflife for farmers and society as a whole.

Working Landscapes: The working landscape is defined as an economically and ecologically vital and sustainable landscape where agricultural and other natural resource-based producers generate multiple public benefits while providing for their own, and their communities', economic and social well-being.

Appendix A:

Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Act

Chapter 1. General Provisions

Public Resources Code, Section 32300. This division shall be known, and may be cited, as the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Act.

32301. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is a unique natural resource of local, state, and national significance.

(b) At 1,300 square miles, the Delta is the largest estuary on the west coast of North and South America.

(c) Its rivers and labyrinths of sloughs and channels are home to 750 species of plants and wildlife as well as 55 species of fish, provide habitat for 700 native plant and animal species, and are part of the Pacific Flyway.

(d) The Delta contains more than 500,000 acres of agricultural land, with unique soils, and farmers who are creative and utilize innovative agriculture, such as carbon sequestration crops, subsidence reversal crops, wildlife-friendly crops, and crops direct for marketing to the large urban populations nearby.

(e) The Delta and Suisun Marsh provide numerous opportunities for recreation, such as boating, kayaking, fishing, hiking, birding, and hunting. Navigable waterways in the Delta are available for public access and currently make up the majority of recreational opportunities. There is a need for land-based recreational access points including parks, picnic areas, and campgrounds.

(f) The Delta's history is rich with a distinct natural, agricultural, and cultural heritage. It is home to the community of Locke, the only town in the United States built primarily by early Chinese immigrants. Other legacy communities include Bethel Island, Clarksburg, Courtland, Freeport, Hood, Isleton, Knightsen, Rio Vista, Ryde, and Walnut Grove.

(g) The Delta is home to more than 500,000 people and 200,000 jobs, and contributes over thirty-five billion dollars ($35,000,000,000) to the state's economy.

(h) In addition, the Delta provides water to more than 25 million Californians and three million acres of agricultural land. It supports a four hundred billion dollar ($400,000,000,000) economy and is traversed by energy, communications, and transportation facilities vital to the economic health of California.

(i) A Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy can support efforts that advance both environmental protection and the economic well-being of Delta residents in a complementary manner, including all of the following:

(1) Protect and enhance habitat and habitat restoration.

(2) Protect and preserve Delta agriculture and working landscapes.

(3) Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation.

(4) Promote Delta legacy communities and economic vitality in the Delta in coordination with the Delta Protection Commission.

(5) Increase the resilience of the Delta to the effects of natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, in coordination with the Delta Protection Commission.

(6) Protect and improve water quality.

(7) Assist the Delta regional economy through the operation of the conservancy's program.

(8) Identify priority projects and initiatives for which funding is needed.

(9) Protect, conserve, and restore the region's physical, agricultural, cultural, historical, and living resources.

(10) Assist local entities in the implementation of their habitat conservation plans (HCPs) and natural community conservation plans (NCCPs).

(11) Facilitate take protection and safe harbor agreements under the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1531 et seq.) and the California Endangered Species Act (Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 2050) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code) for adjacent landowners and local public agencies.

(12) Promote environmental education.

Chapter 2. Definitions

32310. For the purposes of this division, the following terms have the following meanings:

(a) "Board" means the governing board of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy.

(b) "Conservancy" means the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy.

(c) "Delta" means the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta as defined in Section 12220 of the Water Code.

(d) "Fund" means the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Fund created pursuant to Section 32360.

(e) "Local public agency" means a city, county, special district, or joint powers authority.

(f) "Nonprofit organization" means a private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code and that has among its principal charitable purposes preservation of land for scientific, recreational, scenic, or open-space opportunities, protection of the natural environment, preservation or enhancement of wildlife, preservation of cultural and historical resources, or efforts to provide for the enjoyment of public lands.

(g) "Suisun Marsh" means the area defined in Section 29101 and protected by Division 19 (commencing with Section 29000).

Chapter 3. Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy

32320. There is in the Natural Resources Agency the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy, which is created as a state agency to work in collaboration and cooperation with local governments and interested parties.

32322. (a) The conservancy shall act as a primary state agency to implement ecosystem restoration in the Delta.

(b) The conservancy shall support efforts that advance environmental protection and the economic well-being of Delta residents, including all of the following:

(1) Protect and enhance habitat and habitat restoration.

(2) Protect and preserve Delta agriculture and working landscapes.

(3) Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation in the Delta.

(4) Promote Delta legacy communities and economic vitality in the Delta, in coordination with the Delta Protection Commission.

(5) Increase the resilience of the Delta to the effects of natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, in coordination with the Delta Protection Commission.

(6) Protect and improve water quality.

(7) Assist the Delta regional economy through the operation of the conservancy's program.

(8) Identify priority projects and initiatives for which funding is needed.

(9) Protect, conserve, and restore the region's physical, agricultural, cultural, historical, and living resources.

(10) Assist local entities in the implementation of their habitat conservation plans (HCPs) and natural community conservation plans (NCCPs).

(11) Facilitate take protection and safe harbor agreements under the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1531 et seq.), the California Endangered Species Act (Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 2050) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code), and the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 2800) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code) for adjacent landowners and local public agencies.

(12) Promote environmental education through grant funding.

(c) When implementing subdivision (b), the conservancy shall under-take efforts to enhance public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public.

Chapter 4. Governing Board

32330. The board shall consist of 11 voting members and two nonvoting members, appointed or designated as follows:

The 11 voting members of the board shall consist of all of the following:

(1) The Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency, or his or her designee.

(2) The Director of Finance, or his or her designee.

(3) One member of the board or a designee who is appointed by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, who is a resident of that county.

(4) One member of the board or a designee who is appointed by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors, who is a resident of that county.

(5) One member of the board or a designee who is appointed by the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors, who is a resident of that county.

(6) One member of the board or a designee who is appointed by the Solano County Board of Supervisors, who is a resident of that county.

(7) One member of the board or a designee who is appointed by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors, who is a resident of that county.

(8) Two public members appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate.

(9) One public member appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules.

(10) One public member appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly.

(b) The two nonvoting members shall consist of a Member of the Senate, appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, and a Member of the Assembly, appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly. The members appointed under this subdivision shall meet with the conservancy and participate in its activities to the extent that this participation is not incompatible with their positions as Members of the Legislature. The appointed members shall represent a district that encompasses a portion of the Delta.

(c) Ten liaison advisers who shall serve in an advisory, nonvoting capacity shall consist of all of the following:

(1) One representative of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, designated by the United States Secretary of the Interior.

(2) One representative of the United States National Marine Fisheries Service, designated by the United States Secretary of the Interior.

(3) One representative of the United States Bureau of Reclamation, designated by the United States Secretary of the Interior.

(4) One representative of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, designated by the Commanding Officer, United States Army Corps of Engineers, South Pacific Division.

(5) A designee of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission for coordination purposes.

(6) A designee of the State Coastal Conservancy for coordination purposes.

(7) A designee of the Suisun Resource Conservation District for coordination purposes.

(8) A designee of the Central Valley Flood Protection Board.

(9) A designee of the Yolo Basin Foundation.

(10) A designee of the Delta Protection Commission.

(d) The public members appointed by the Governor shall serve for a term of four years, with a two-term limit.

(e) The locally appointed members and alternates shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing board of supervisors.

(f) The public members appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules or the Speaker of the Assembly shall serve for a term of four years, with a two-term limit.

(g) The Members of the Senate and Assembly shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing body.

(h) Alternates may be appointed by the county boards of supervisors.

32332. Annually, the voting members of the board shall elect from among the voting members a chairperson and vice chairperson, and other officers as necessary. If the office of the chairperson or vice chairperson becomes vacant, a new chairperson or vice chairperson shall be elected by the voting members of the board to serve for the remainder of the term. The chairperson shall be selected from among the members specified in paragraphs (3) to (7), inclusive, of subdivision (a) of Section 32330.

32334. A majority of the voting members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of the business of the conservancy. The board shall not transact the business of the conservancy if a quorum is not present at the time a vote is taken. A decision of the board requires an affirmative vote of six of the voting membership, and the vote is binding with respect to all matters acted on by the conservancy.

32336. The board shall adopt rules and procedures for the conduct of business by the conservancy.

32338. The board may establish advisory boards or committees, hold community meetings, and engage in public outreach.

32340. The board shall establish and maintain a headquarters office within the Delta. The conservancy may rent or own real and personal property and equipment pursuant to applicable statutes and regulations.

32342. The board shall determine the qualifications of, and shall appoint, an executive officer of the conservancy, who shall be exempt from civil service. The board shall employ other staff as necessary to execute the powers and functions provided for in this division.

32344. The board may enter into contracts with private entities and public agencies to procure consulting and other services necessary to achieve the purposes of this division.

32346. The conservancy's expenses for support and administration may be paid from the conservancy's operating budget and any other funding sources available to the conservancy.

32348. The board shall conduct business in accordance with the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act (Article 9 (commencing with Section 11120) of Chapter 1 of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code).

32350. The board shall hold its regular meetings within the Delta or the City of Rio Vista.

Chapter 5. Powers, Duties, and Limitations

32360. (a) Except as specified in Section 32360.5, the jurisdiction and activities of the conservancy are limited to the Delta and Suisun Marsh.

(b) (1) The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Fund is hereby created in the State Treasury. Moneys in the fund shall be available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, only for the purposes of this division.

(2) Funds provided for ecosystem restoration and enhancement shall be available for ecosystem restoration projects consistent with the conservancy's strategic plan adopted pursuant to Section 32376.

(3) Funds may be allocated to a separate program within the conservancy for economic sustainability in the Delta. The economic sustainability plan adopted pursuant to Section 29759 shall be the basis for the program. Funds provided to the conservancy to implement ecosystem restoration projects pursuant to the Bay Delta Conservation Plan shall only be used for ecosystem restoration purposes.

32360.5. In furtherance of the conservancy's role in implementing the Delta Plan, the conservancy may take or fund an action outside the Delta and Suisun Marsh if the board makes all of the following findings:

(a) The project implements the ecosystem goals of the Delta Plan.

(b) The project is consistent with the requirements of any applicable state and federal permits.

(c) The conservancy has given notice to and reviewed any comments received from affected local jurisdictions and the Delta Protection Commission.

(d) The conservancy has given notice to and reviewed any comments received from any state conservancy where the project is located.

(e) The project will provide significant benefits to the Delta.

32362. The conservancy may engage in partnerships with nonprofit organizations, local public agencies, and landowners.

32363. In implementing this division, the conservancy shall cooperate and consult with the city or county in which a grant is proposed to be expended or an interest in real property is proposed to be acquired, and shall, as necessary or appropriate, coordinate its efforts with other state agencies, in cooperation with the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency. The conservancy shall, as necessary or appropriate, cooperate and consult with a public water system, levee, flood control, or drainage agency that owns or operates facilities, including lands appurtenant thereto, where a grant is proposed to be expended or an interest in land is proposed to be acquired.

32364. (a) The conservancy may require a grantee to enter into an agreement with the conservancy on terms and conditions specified by the conservancy.

(b) The conservancy may require a cost-share or local funding requirement for a grant. The conservancy may make that cost-share or local funding requirement contingent upon the total amount of funding available, the fiscal resources of

the applicant, or urgency of the project. The conservancy may waive cost-share requirements.

(c) The conservancy may fund or award grants for plans and feasibility studies consistent with its strategic plan or the Delta Plan.

(d) The conservancy may seek repayment or reimbursement of funds granted on terms and conditions it deems appropriate. The proceeds of repayment shall be deposited in the fund.

(e) The conservancy may require any funds that exceed the costs of eligible or approved projects or of acquisition to be returned to the conservancy, to be available for expenditure when appropriated by the Legislature.

32364.5. (a) The conservancy may provide grants and loans to state agencies, local public agencies, and nonprofit organizations to further the goals of the conservancy.

(b) An entity applying for a grant from the conservancy to acquire an interest in real property shall specify all of the following in the grant application:

(1) The intended use of the property.

(2) The manner in which the land will be managed.

(3) How the cost of ongoing operations, maintenance, and management will be provided, including an analysis of the maintaining entity's financial capacity to support those ongoing costs.

(4) Grantees shall demonstrate, where applicable, how they will provide payments in lieu of taxes, assessments, or charges otherwise due to local government.

32365. The conservancy may sue and be sued.

32366. (a) The conservancy may acquire from willing sellers or transferors interests in real property and improve, lease, or transfer interests in real property, in order to carry out the purposes of this division.

(b) The conservancy shall use conservation easements to accomplish ecosystem restoration whenever feasible.

32368. The conservancy may enter into an agreement with a public agency, nonprofit organization, or private entity for the construction, management, or maintenance of facilities authorized by the conservancy.

32370. The conservancy shall not exercise the power of eminent domain.

32372. (a) The conservancy may pursue and accept funds from various sources, including, but not limited to, federal, state, and local funds or grants, gifts, donations, bequests, devises, subventions, grants, rents, royalties, or other assistance and funds from public and private sources.

(b) The conservancy may accept fees levied by others.

(c) The conservancy may create and manage endowments.

(d) All funds received by the conservancy shall be deposited in the fund for expenditure for the purposes of this division.

32376. Within two years of hiring an executive officer, the board shall prepare and adopt a strategic plan to achieve the goals of the conservancy. The plan shall describe

its interaction with local, regional, state, and federal land use, recreation, water and flood management, and habitat conservation and protection efforts within and adjacent to the Delta. The strategic plan shall establish priorities and criteria for projects and programs, based upon an assessment of program requirements, institutional capabilities, and funding needs throughout the Delta. The strategic plan shall be consistent with the Delta Plan, the Delta Protection Commission's resources management plan, the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan, the Suisun Marsh Preservation Act of 1977 (Division 19 (commencing with Section 29000)), and the Habitat Management, Preservation and Restoration Plan for the Suisun Marsh.

32378. (a) The conservancy may expend funds and award grants and loans to facilitate collaborative planning efforts and to develop projects and programs that are designed to further the purposes of this division.

(b) The conservancy may provide and make available technical information, expertise, and other nonfinancial assistance to public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and tribal organizations, to support program and project development and implementation.

32380. The conservancy may acquire water or water rights to support the goals of the conservancy.

32381. This division does not grant to the conservancy any of the following:

(a) The power of a city or county to regulate land use.

(b) The power to regulate any activities on land, except as the owner of an interest in the land, or pursuant to an agreement with, or a license or grant of management authority from, the owner of an interest in the land.

(c) The power over water rights held by others.