

Delta Conservation Framework – Public Draft

Public Review Workshop 1, October 30, 2017, Walnut Grove, CA.

Meeting Overview

Convened by the Delta Conservancy, this workshop was the first of two public input sessions on the Department of Fish & Wildlife’s Delta Conservation Framework. This Framework is the culmination of six workshops and includes a vision for conversation in the Delta, along with Goals, Strategies and Objectives to guide planning efforts around Conservation in the Delta.

Meeting Desired Results

1. Seek stakeholder feedback on the public draft of the Delta Conservation Framework.
2. Encourage a dialogue among the varied Delta stakeholders that can be continued into the future

Speakers included Campbell Ingram, Delta Conservancy; Carl Wilcox, Brooke Jacobs, and Christina Sloop, CA Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW). Genevieve Taylor, Ag Innovations facilitated the meeting.

Meeting Guidelines

1. Listen Courteously
2. Speak Candidly and Concisely
3. Suspend Certainty
4. Be Present

Agenda

1:00/35	Welcome, Overview & Update
1:35/40	Q&A
2:15/10	Break
2:25/75	Group Input Session
3:40/20	Wrap up and Close

Who attended: Thirteen participants joined the conversation and gave their perspective on stakeholder engagement, the concept of Regional Planning Partnerships, and the content of the Delta Conservation Framework. Below are results from the afternoon.

Meeting Highlights

1. The group reviewed and gave feedback on the vision, goals, stakeholder engagement, and the Regional Collaboration Partnerships concept outlined in the Delta Conservation Framework as a recommended implementation mechanism. There was a sense of optimism in the group; the group spoke frankly about their concerns but acknowledged that the approach of locally-driven collaboration is a significant shift from past state efforts around conservation.
2. Participants gave feedback on how to increase participation at a local level. It became clear that in order to bring the Delta Community into conservation planning and implementation, the “ask” needed to be more specific; therefore it should be easier to get participation in the Regional Planning Partnership conversations because it is more locally driven and the impacts are clearer.
3. Major concerns included: a lack of confidence in the State’s ability to manage lands proactively; that there would be undo burden from a science and implementation perspective on local project implementers.

4. Major recommendations included: an affirmation that local participation is crucial; multi-benefits including recreation, groundwater and more are important for success; that adaptive management should be supported with long-term funding. Moreover, a number of additional tools and models were highlighted for incorporation into the Framework.

Meeting Results

Welcome from Campbell Ingram, Delta Conservancy

- Delta Conservancy was created to be lead agency for restoration and economic development in Delta. The Delta Conservation Framework (Framework) is important to the Delta Conservancy – and all of us - as a valuable contribution to a better, shared understanding of how we restore ecological function. A few things to keep in mind:
 - We all benefit from a healthy and functional ecosystem; locals reminisce about what things used to be like in the Delta, whether they are farmers, fishers, or families.
 - When our ecosystem declines, regulations increase to prevent extinction of Delta smelt or salmon
 - CA WaterFix is apparently moving forward on it's own track, and presents challenges for having this conversation. The hope for tonight is that we can set that aside to the extent possible and focus on the ecosystem's health with or without the tunnels project.
 - The Framework represents two significant changes in how we have done things in the past. 1) a focus on strong science to help understand how we should do restoration effectively, and 2) a clear recognition that if we are going to be successful, local involvement is key. The people who are affected must be at the table.

Overview Presentation, Department of Fish & Wildlife

The full slideshow can be found at: <http://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=152467>. Main points covered include:

- An overview of the 2016 Framework Workshop Series and how it impacted the development of the Framework
- A review of the basic tenets of the Framework, each section, and the layout of the document, including its vision, goals, and appendix. The appendix provides a multitude of resources for local entities to use as they begin their own planning process.
- A description of Regional Conservation Planning Partnerships. Seven areas have been identified for Regional Conservation Planning Partnerships, including Suisun Marsh, Yolo Bypass, Cache Slough Complex, Central Delta Corridor Partnership, North Delta, South Delta, and West Delta.
- **The path forward:** The Framework is intended to be a high level, landscape scale framework that informs but does not dictate the Regional Conservation Planning Partnerships. These partnerships are intended to include as collaborative partners the Delta community, agriculture, local agencies, and private landowners alongside the federal and state agencies (including water and flood management) who are required to work in the Delta.

Question & Answer with Panelists

After the presentation, every participant was invited to ask questions and give comments directly to the panelists. Panelists included: Campbell Ingram, Delta Conservancy; Carl Wilcox, Department of Fish & Wildlife, and Brooke Jacobs, Department of Fish & Wildlife; Christina Sloop, Department of Fish & Wildlife.

Q&A Session

Participant Question: How are you engaging locals for input on the Framework?

Panelist Response:

- Delta Restoration Network list-serve
- We are working with local champions to spread the word
- Notices on library and community boards
- DFW is concerned that we are not getting enough engagement from the Delta community; please give us ideas for how to bring more people in!
- Regional Strategies will help to get locals involved because it is more specific than the general Framework
 - Local stakeholder input is important when it comes to the regional planning partnerships
 - Separates the areas, need to discuss issues and opportunities specific to each regional context
 - Central Delta Corridor will be key as a first example of how the regional partnership process can work

Participant Question: Why hold a workshop during the day?

Panelist Response: This workshop is intended more for local agencies, and an evening meeting on November 16 will be for anyone who can't easily attend during the day.

Participant Question: The Framework doesn't address water resources – How can we talk about a viable Delta without that?

Panelist Response:

- DFW didn't want the Framework stopped by the conversation with Delta Tunnels.
- It is possible to have a discussion without the tunnels
- We know things are changing, and we can work towards conservation within those parameters. For example, we know that farming – and wildlife-friendly farming - does not work with salt water.

Participant Recommendations:

- Add a piece about Delta water in text with regards to water supply – there is a need to address evaporation on the islands
- Look at major inflows into the Delta and see who needs to be involved

For more information, please go to: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/watersheds/dcf>, or contact: dcf@wildlife.ca.gov

- Identify differences in water consumption among agriculture, restoration and carbon farming that recognizes and punts to larger process to weigh pros and cons of each land use

Group Input Session: Feedback on Framework

During the group input session, the group was also asked for feedback on specific questions and sections on the Framework. Every participant made several contributions to the discussion.

*Question 1: Throughout the 2016 public workshop series, we heard about the importance of considering agriculture and communities in the Delta during conservation planning. **Does the vision statement adequately balance agriculture and local communities with conservation over the long-term?***

Vision: In 2050, the Delta is composed of resilient natural and managed ecosystems situated within a mosaic of towns and agricultural landscapes, where people prosper and healthy wildlife communities thrive.

Participant Feedback:

- Pretty High level: What is the significance?
 - *Panelist Answer: Long-term, landscape scale vision that ties together various regional partnership strategies/action plans*
- I feel encouraged to see a document like the Framework being developed by DFW!
- Recreation means that there is private money to protect and preserve; should reflect it in the vision.
- Eases outreach to Duck Clubs, etc.
- Recreation = trails, boating, hiking => pros and cons with increased numbers of tourists and boat traffic in the Delta impacts water skiing and other recreational activities
- GPS directing new traffic through Delta is an issue, current roads cannot support large amounts of traffic

Question 2: In Section 2, Do you agree with the goals? Why or why not? What would you add or change?

- *Comment:* Projects that are successful involve many aspects beyond ecosystem. The framework is not intended to direct, it is intended to guide and provide potential solutions as they seem appropriate through the regional planning partnerships.
- *Comment:* Separate efforts should be designed as needed to achieve benefits – multiple benefits maybe not be from one or same area/project but by tying together various project outcomes at the landscape level

Question 3: Section 6 is all about the ideas of Regional Conservation Planning Partnerships, and is the path forward from Section 2. Do you agree with that concept? What is the best way to ensure local support and engagement?

Comments:

- Conservation planning that allows for local needs to be considered, and this will likely mean better engagement

For more information, please go to: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/watersheds/dcf>, or contact: dcf@wildlife.ca.gov

- What about incentives for landowners? Ideas like Habitat Exchange should be included
- Delta Meadows – underutilized – opportunity here to include it
- Local ownership of efforts – opportunities to engage – the Delta Conservation Framework represents this offer for local engagement to further plan and implement goals and strategies
- Engage vs. just provide/present info to those crafting effort
- Utilize local expertise & long-term knowledge of area – get buy in from local experts – have them help implement the Framework => Word of mouth support
- Needs to add focus on: Resource/safety enforcement – plan into restoration/preservation
 - There are key questions that seem to be unanswered:
 - How will conservation areas be managed?
 - What are the resources required?
 - How can we be creative and create a win-win-win with local interests?
 - How to achieve long-term operations & maintenance/management?
 - Incorporate working lands (Cosumnes Preserve & Staten = examples)
 - Seasonal uses –(corn summer and flood winter)
 - Find income generator for long-term conservation land management

Question 4: In Section X, there is a definition of what a “multi-benefit project” is. What would you add or change to that definition?

- Should include groundwater restoration – filling in cone of depression, quality, route treated water to fields instead of pumping ground water
- The Framework should include water supply issues

Comments:

- Start regionally to plan projects – project supporters should work with those who have concerns to resolve issues before going forward with permitting phase
- Cosumnes River Preserve & Yolo Bypass => good examples of Multi-benefit projects => flood management/recreation/agriculture/ecosystem
- Take each project one step at a time and think of it as fitting into larger landscape and links to multiple benefits
- Continue existing and implement new projects for outreach and education to promote Delta as place?
- Aiming for multiple benefits doesn’t mean each project must have Delta-wide benefits
- Cache Slough Planning Partnership started with examination of data to assess scenarios, not governance.

Question 5: Reviewing sections 3 & 4 on science and adaptive management, do you agree with the goals stated? Why or why not?

- Tying functional connectivity through entire Delta is problematic.
- Cost share on part of water agencies etc.
- Put any conservation action within context of greater Delta/functions
- Put burden upon assessing larger impacts upon agencies vs. project proponents – agencies should exert control through funding mechanisms/cost share requirements

- Science needs to balance with Practical knowledge. Including scientific monitoring and evaluation as part of project requirements can be costly and burdensome; need to consider burden on conservation project or effort.
- *Critique of adaptive management*
 - Need testable hypotheses
 - Seems like its an excuse to study, then set aside and not fund
 - Concern that this does not always have to be done; not everything has to be studied.
- Water Quality => references in DCF may be outdated – we will provide comments

Question 6: Section 5 focused on funding and permitting strategies. Do you agree with the goals stated? Why or why not? Would an agricultural ombudsman position be useful in navigating permitting?

- Needs to be supported over time at CDFW. What happens if current staff leaves – will the Framework continue?
 - A dedicated person is needed to lead permitting forward
 - A dedicated person could help develop local consensus
 - One-stop-shop where all permitting agencies coordinate would be a great idea
 - Permitting disconnect even within an agency on separate permits (e.g. Army Corps)
 - One permit application for multi-agency review (WA State)
 - Pre-permit meetings useful – have similar meetings later in process
 - Adaptive mgmt. – talk about along with funding - need \$ to fund Adaptive Management
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VI. Conclusions

- Tie in conservation with local community priorities as best as possible to reach multiple benefits where possible
- Who can provide big picture thinking & analysis? e.g. SAFCA (<http://www.safca.org/>) analysis in lower Yolo Bypass – It helped to be prepared for future conversations/anticipate impacts. Also planning approach in Cache Slough utilizing data and tools from SFEI
- Delta Stewardship Council Independent Science Board ISB is doing an excellent job
- An inspiring model to include is the walking wetlands initiative from Oregon – walking wetlands allow farmers to put in Tule marsh and rotate fields out of production for a time. Then crops are planted again which generates more money in crop production after wetland removal (this is problematic due to no net loss of wetlands regulation). However, Farmers need to know they can take out wetlands once they get put back in – need permits to allow rotation
- Conservation needs to be locally driven
- Conservation projects should reduce – not increase – burden on local implementers; use your selection criteria to identify the right projects that contribute to the science and monitoring – don't put the burden of science and monitoring on local implementers.
- Identify benefits beyond conservation of individual projects to show long-term and big picture outcomes