



# Update on Suisun Marsh Plan

January 2005

## Charter Group



### **SOQs Due January 21 for Environmental Review Contractor**

The required environmental review process for the Suisun Marsh Plan (SMP) activities is under way. The next step is the selection of a contractor to prepare the draft programmatic environmental impact statement/report (PEIS/R). Potential contractors must submit their Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) by noon on Friday, **January 21**. The PEIS/R review will encompass about 116,000 acres, extending from Benicia east to Collinsville and from the Contra Costa County line north to Highway 12. Information on the SOQ can be obtained at <http://www.delta.dfg.ca.gov/suisunmarsh/charter/announcements.asp>

### **Science Advisor and Science Workgroup Proposals Due by January 20**

The SMP Workgroup is making progress on establishing a Suisun Science Advisor for the Suisun Marsh Plan. The Science Advisor Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is available through the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). The RFQ can be obtained at <http://www.abag.ca.gov/calfedrfp/>. The closing date is Thursday, **January 20**. The Workgroup anticipates selecting a Science Advisor in February. Once on board, the Science Advisor will play a vital role in the Suisun Marsh Plan, helping assure that the plan is based on the best available scientific information as it is developed.

The same RFQ also seeks candidates for a Technical Science Workgroup to support the Science Advisor and the work of the Suisun Marsh Charter Group.

### **Conceptual Model Expected in March**

Development of the five conceptual models for the Suisun Marsh Plan is progressing rapidly, with their completion projected in March, 2005. The models are for tidal wetlands, managed wetlands, water quality, levees, and sub-tidal aquatic species. The knowledge gained through the conceptual model will lead first to pilot-scale restoration projects, then large-scale wetland restoration, as well as long-term effective management of restored sites.

### **CALFED Legislation, a Boost for Suisun Marsh Work**

In November Congress passed and the President signed H.R. 2828, which authorizes federal participation in the Bay-Delta Program for the first time in three years. The \$395-million *authorization* for a wide range of programs centered on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta will provide important benefits. However, it will require annual *appropriations* by Congress to actually fund the authorized activities.

For Suisun Marsh the measure provides specific authorization for Suisun Marsh levees and for restoration of habitat in Suisun Bay and Marsh, including both tidal wetlands and riparian habitat.

The legislation confirms the link between CALFED and Suisun Marsh, recognizing the integral role that the Suisun Bay and Marsh play in the Sacramento-San Joaquin-Delta-Bay ecosystem.

### **Million-Dollar Grant to Help Enhance Suisun Marsh**

Interior Secretary Gale Norton last fall announced a \$1,000,000 federal grant to help restore nearly 25,000 acres of the Suisun Marsh. The grant will be used with \$2,199,634 in matching funds to improve water management and biodiversity in the Marsh. Coordinated by the Suisun Resource Conservation District (SRCD),

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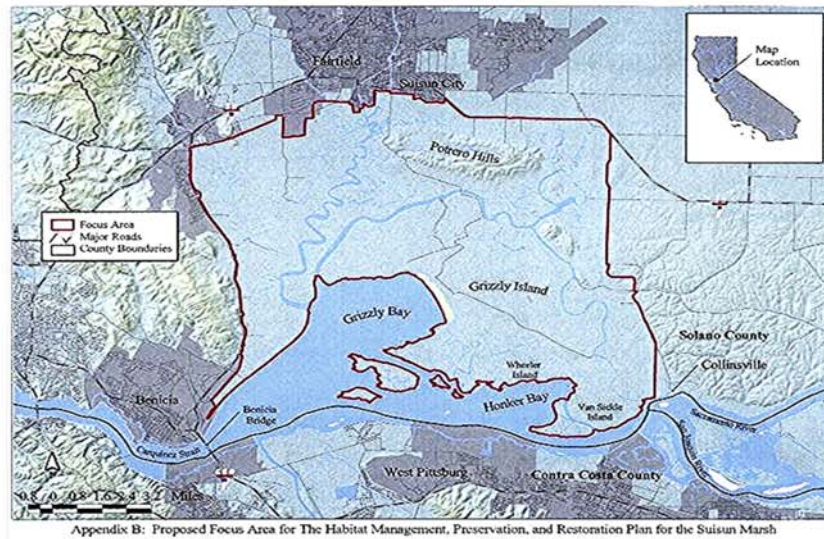
## The Suisun Marsh Plan is:

Local, state and federal agencies that, through the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, help improve the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary are partnering on a plan to protect and enhance wildlife values and water quality in Suisun Marsh, the largest brackish wetland in the western United States. Members of the partnership, known as the Suisun Marsh Charter Group, are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Department of Water Resources, and the California Bay-Delta Authority. The partnership also includes the Suisun Resource Conservation District, which represent the interests of private landowners. The Charter Group works with other participating agencies, including the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in developing this plan.

the grant will enhance brackish water exchanges on lands owned by 32 duck clubs and the California Department of Fish & Game. Funds will be used to construct islands, create new circulation and drainage patterns by contouring pond bottoms, developing circulation ditches, adding interior water control structures and redirecting water flows. Other partners include Ducks Unlimited, California Waterfowl Association, the California Department of Fish and Game, the Coastal Conservancy, the Wildlife Conservation Board. Additional funding was provided by the Dean Witter Foundation and the Harvey L. and Maude Sorenson Foundation. "The \$3,000,000 generated for this package of enhancements will be a springboard to accelerate the re-invigoration of a significant portion of the Suisun Marsh habitat," according to Steve Chappell, Executive Director of the SRCDC. Chappell is one of the principals in SMP.

## Voluntary Vernal Pool Recovery Plan Can Help Suisun Marsh

In November, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released a draft Recovery Plan for Vernal pool species that covers areas on the northern and eastern edges of Suisun Marsh. Recovery plans are entirely voluntary action plans (for non-federal parties) to help restore and maintain rare species. In this case the spring-time pools around the higher perimeter of the Suisun Marsh that contain unique plant and animal species are the subject of the plan. Comments maybe submitted through March 15, 2005. After the plan is completed, it will open new opportunities for private parties to partner with the federal government and to obtain funding or other benefits if they participate in recovery of vernal pools. The full plan can be found at <http://sacramento.fws.gov>.



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