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# Recreation Proposal for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun Marsh



California State Parks  
Planning Division  
2011

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Edmund G. Brown Jr., Governor  
John Laird, Secretary, Natural Resources Agency  
Ruth Coleman, Director, California State Parks

Project Team, California State Parks Planning Division  
Dan Ray, Chief  
Cheryl Essex, Associate Park and Recreation Specialist  
Philomene Smith, Long Range Planning Manager  
Julia Cox, Assistant Landscape Architect  
Sara Baldwin, Associate Park and Recreation Specialist  
Alexandra Stehl, Associate Park and Recreation Specialist  
Adrienne Tillis, Secretary



**Spirit of the Delta.** *The sun sets over a Delta landscape that appears just as it might have 150 years ago.*

*"About 2 o'clock, P.M., we entered the mouth of the Sacramento. The Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers empty into the Bay of San Francisco at the same point, about sixty miles from the Pacific, and by numerous mouths, or sloughs as they are here called. These sloughs wind through an immense timbered swamp, and constitute a terraqueous labyrinth of such intricacy, that unskillful and inexperienced navigators have been lost for many days in it, and some, I have been told, have perished, never finding their way out."*

—Edwin Bryant, October 1846

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# Contents

<b>1 Director's Message and Executive Summary</b>	
<b>2 Introduction</b>	
2 Proposal Purpose	
3 Map: The Delta and Suisun Marsh	
4 The State's Role in Recreation	
4 Table: The Role of State Agencies	
5 Delta Adventures: Fun with Family and Friends	
6 Map: Gateway-Basecamp-Adventure strategy	
7 The Importance of Partnerships	
7 Broad Recommendations	
<b>8 Existing Recreation Demand</b>	
8 Fun with Family and Friends	
9 Delta Adventures: A Boating Lifestyle	
10 Nature-Based Recreation	
10 Food-, Wine-, and Heritage-Related Activities	
10 Interstate and International Tourism	
11 Delta Adventures: Hunting Excursion	
<b>12 Summary of Existing Resources</b>	
12 Public Lands, Facilities, and Programs	
12 Table: Land Area in the Delta	
13 Map: Existing Public Lands, Scenic Highways, and Trails	
14 Private Facilities	
14 Education and Interpretation Facilities	
15 Delta Adventures: Bird Watching Safari	
16 Cultural Events, Heritage Facilities	
17 Delta Adventures: Heritage Tourism	
<b>18 The Changing Delta</b>	
18 The Delta's Population Today and Tomorrow	
18 Chart: Population and Percentages by Age	
19 Chart: Projected Populations, 2050	
20 The Changing Delta Landscape	
<b>22 Recommendations and Outcomes</b>	
22 California State Parks Recommendations	
22 Maps: California State Parks Recommendations	
25 Delta Adventures: Old Sacramento Adventure	
26 Recommendations – Other State Agencies	
28 Trails Recommendations	
29 Proposed National Heritage Area	
30 Economic Outcomes	
32 Quality-of-Life Outcomes	
33 Delta Adventures: Biking Excursion	
<b>34 Conclusion</b>	
<b>35 References</b>	

This report is available online at <http://www.parks.ca.gov/deltarecreation>.



**Fun with Family and Friends.** From jet-ski rides to beach lounging, the Delta offers recreation opportunities for all. See pages 5 and 8 for more on this Delta adventure.



*Delta Recreation. Boaters enjoy an evening on the Delta surrounded by the ambiance of this unique place.*

# Director's Message and Executive Summary

From the summit of Mount Diablo State Park, visitors look out at the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers as they flow together in Suisun Bay. The vista symbolizes how the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun Marsh create an extraordinary meeting place—for the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, for the populations of the Central Valley and Bay Area, and for the vacation destinations of San Francisco, the Wine Country, and the Sierra Nevada.

The region's waterways, parks, wildlife refuges, marinas, historic communities, and country roads provide recreation for residents and visitors alike. Wonderful places to relax outdoors, go boating, enjoy nature, or appreciate the food, culture, and history of the Delta and Suisun Marsh are in reach of millions of Californians and other visitors.

This proposal recommends improvement and, in some cases, expansion of California State Parks' four Delta recreation areas and six other state parks on the edge of the Delta and Suisun Marsh. It identifies opportunities to create four new state parks to serve the region. The report offers ways to improve recreation at wildlife habitat areas, publicly owned levees, scenic highways, state recreational trails, and other public lands, and to coordinate recreation and tourism efforts. These recommendations constitute California State Parks' proposal to expand state recreation areas in the Delta, as provided in the Delta Reform Act of 2009.

We release these recommendations in an era of change. Budgets are tight, and funds aren't in hand to implement many of the plan's recommendations. But by planning now, we can prepare to use resources that become available and point the way for those who come after us. This plan will require cooperation among state, local, and federal agencies, visitor-serving businesses, and nonprofit organizations. No one agency can do this job alone.

Although the Delta and Suisun Marsh may change significantly over coming decades, their recreation assets and authentic character can endure and find wider appreciation. As we work together to improve recreation and tourism, we will also contribute to the area's economic vitality, supporting jobs, growing businesses, and improving the quality of life that makes the Delta and Suisun Marsh region an attractive place to live, visit, and do business.



Ruth Coleman  
Director, California State Parks



**Ruth Coleman, Director of California State Parks.** *The Director's first concern in the Delta is providing quality recreation opportunities. (Photo by Jim Block.)*

# Introduction



**Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act.** *Specific guidance for this proposal is from these sections of the Act (due to passage of SBx7 1 in 2009):*

• *Public Resources Code Section 29702: “The Legislature further finds and declares that the basic goals of the state for the Delta are the following: (a) Achieve the two coequal goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. The coequal goals shall be achieved in a manner that protects and enhances the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place. (b) Protect, maintain, and, where possible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Delta environment, including, but not limited to, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and recreational activities.”*

• *Water Code Section 85301(c)(1): “The Department of Parks and Recreation shall prepare a proposal, for submission to the commission, to expand within the Delta the network of state recreation areas, combining existing and newly designated areas. The proposal may incorporate appropriate aspects of any existing plans, including the Central Valley Vision Implementation Plan adopted by the Department of Parks and Recreation.”*

The Delta and Suisun Marsh region is a one-of-a-kind place whose mix of land and water offers diverse and authentic recreation opportunities. While privately-owned farmland is off-limits to the public, publicly-managed lands and waterways, including parks, boating facilities, some levees, and some road rights-of-way, support diverse recreation activities. Recreation opportunities include fishing, boating along miles of navigable waterways; bird watching, other nature activities, and hunting; enjoying region restaurants, campgrounds, picnic areas, and historic buildings; and events that draw visitors to taste local produce and wine and learn about this unique place.

Despite these opportunities, many people—even residents of the five Delta counties—are unfamiliar with the region, which still retains an aura of mystery. Maps of the region, which encompasses 1,300 square miles, look much like a puzzle, with the geometric agricultural landscape extending inward from winding levee roads. Railroads, ferries, bridges, and navigation channels traverse the Delta.

This report summarizes existing recreation opportunities in the region and presents California State Parks’ recommendations for protecting and enhancing them. The recommendations include ways to invite more visitors and residents to enjoy and appreciate the Delta and Suisun Marsh region.

**Proposal Purpose.** This recreation proposal responds to 2009’s Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act (“the Act”), which created the Delta Stewardship Council to develop and oversee a master plan for the Delta and Suisun Marsh. The proposal is submitted to the Council, which may consider it as it prepares its plan. The proposal is also submitted to the Delta Protection Commission, which is developing an Economic Sustainability Plan, a part of the overall master plan.

This proposal carries out the Act and the mission of California State Parks by:

- assessing recreation demand and opportunities,
- describing issues that may affect recreation, and
- recommending additions and/or improvements to State-managed lands and programs in and around the Delta and Suisun Marsh to increase recreation opportunities.

**A network of recreation areas.** The proposal recommends a network of recreation areas, including parks, resorts, boating facilities, historic communities, agritourism attractions, and other visitor-oriented businesses. These areas would be connected by scenic driving routes, boating trails, or bicycling and hiking trails. A “gateway-basecamp-adventure” strategy for this network, as well as partnerships among agencies, businesses, and nonprofits, would help reveal the region to more visitors.

**Accommodating projects affecting recreation.** The proposal highlights existing recreation assets as well as new recreation opportunities compatible with projects that may alter region recreation opportunities. Such projects may include pipelines or canals to carry water around or through the Delta, flood-control efforts, and restoration projects such as large restored wildlife habitat areas, especially at six potential “restoration opportunity areas.”

**Proposal information sources.** The project team analyzed a variety of information to develop this proposal and its recommendations, including government statistics, general plans for state parks, and input from local agencies and other partners. Most recommendations for state parks are from the *Central Valley Vision*, a series of California State Parks reports on improving the state park system in the Central Valley. Other recommendations reflect suggestions of recreation experts, water or fish and wildlife agencies, tourism businesses, and residents. Public comments were invited on a draft proposal; this final proposal considers comments from thirty agencies, organizations, and individuals.

Proposal recommendations aim to provide visitors and residents authentic outdoor experiences rooted in the unique and enduring character of the Delta and Suisun Marsh.



**The Delta and Suisun Marsh areas and nearby counties.** Three areas are referenced in this proposal:

1. The Delta, the legislatively-designated or “legal” Delta, indicated by the solid line of the Delta boundary on the map
2. The Suisun Marsh, indicated by the “dotted and dashed” line west of the Delta, and which, like the Delta, is defined by law
3. The Delta and the Suisun Marsh combined (1,300 square miles)

This proposal includes recreation opportunities in the Delta and Suisun Marsh as well as at nearby sites that provide entry points to these areas or link them to other tourism and recreation attractions.

Note: County statistics in this proposal (for example, population figures) are for entire counties.

**Delta Adventures** are six first-person, fictional stories told in words and photos throughout this document. These stories describe recreation excursions that are possible today or that could be possible as additional recreation opportunities are developed.



**The State’s Role in Recreation.** State, local, and federal agencies share responsibility to provide recreation. California State Parks’ responsibility is to encourage, stimulate, and coordinate recreation. Under state law, the responsibility for funding for recreation associated

with the State Water Project lies with the state, rather than the water project’s water and power customers. For a discussion of stakeholders other than state agencies, see page 7. For more information on the role of the state, see page 12.

**The Role of State Agencies.** This table shows how each agency contributes to recreation in the region.

State Agency Name and Role	Recreation-Related Facilities and Opportunities	Delta and Suisun Marsh Examples
<b>California State Parks (CSP)</b> offers high-quality outdoor recreation and educational opportunities, protects natural and cultural resources, awards grants for local parks, and oversees the California Recreational Trails System.	Day-use picnic areas, campgrounds, marinas, trails, excursion railroads, interpretive services, heritage resource protection, restrooms	Brannan Island SRA, Old Sacramento SHP, American Discovery Trail
<b>Department of Fish and Game (DFG)</b> manages hunting and fishing; operates public lands for wildlife conservation, hunting, fishing, environmental education, and nature study; and encourages private conservation.	Ecological reserves, wildlife areas, boat launches, nature-based recreation and events, fish hatcheries	Woodbridge Ecological Reserve, Grizzly Island Wildlife Area, Clarksburg boat launch
<b>Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW)</b> provides public recreational boating facilities on public lands, marine patrol law enforcement, boating safety and clean and green education, and controls of aquatic invasive species.	Public boat launching facilities, public visitor docks, boat-in day use and overnight facilities, vessel pumpout facilities, floating restrooms, floating campsites	Antioch Marina, Brannan Island SRA, Sherman Island, Belden’s Landing, Bethany Reservoir, and Rio Vista boat launch facilities
<b>Caltrans</b> operates state highways, historic bridges and ferries, and designates state scenic highways.	Scenic highways, ferries, historic bridges	State Hwy. 160, J-Mack Ferry, Steamboat Slough Bridge
<b>Department of Water Resources (DWR)</b> manages California’s water resources, including State Water Project reservoirs, dams, land, and waterways available for recreation use.	Reservoirs, water conveyance infrastructure (canals, diversion sites, waterway flows), flood control projects, and habitat management sites and facilities	Bethany Reservoir, Sacramento River flows, Fremont Weir, Suisun Marsh salinity control structure, Dutch Slough habitat restoration project
<b>State Lands Commission (SLC)</b> has jurisdiction over hundreds of miles of waterways in the Delta, and issues leases for in-stream recreation infrastructure.	Navigable waterways, submerged lands, and dock and pier leases	Three Mile Slough, Walnut Grove Public Dock
<b>Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy</b> will implement ecosystem restoration, advance environmental protection, and support economic sustainability, including tourism and recreation.	Projects that enhance natural resources, cultural resources, or economic sustainability in a manner complementary to increased recreation, tourism, and environmental education	The Delta Plan, Bay/Delta Conservation Plan, Economic Sustainability Plan, and Delta Conservancy Strategic Plan will guide projects
<b>State Coastal Conservancy (SCC)</b> makes grants to purchase, protect, restore, and enhance coastal resources, including San Francisco Bay and Suisun Marsh, and to provide access to the shore.	Shoreline accessways, trails, habitat protection and restoration areas, farmland and open space protection	Rush Ranch protection, San Francisco Bay Area water trail, Marsh Creek stream restoration and trail
<b>Delta Protection Commission (DPC)</b> adaptively manages the Delta’s Primary Zone, including, but not limited to, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and recreation activities.	Heritage resource recognition and enhancement, agritourism program, regional trails	National Heritage Area feasibility study, Great California Delta Trail, Economic Sustainability Plan





## Delta Adventures: Fun with Family and Friends

*"We have our annual Brannan Island vacation at shady campsites big enough for our whole family. We bring our boat and tents for the younger adults and kids, but rent an RV for the older folks. Ever since I found that great bait shop in Rio Vista, we catch the biggest stripers and catfish in the Delta. Last year we rented two jet skis—they were already loaded on the trailer at the marina down*

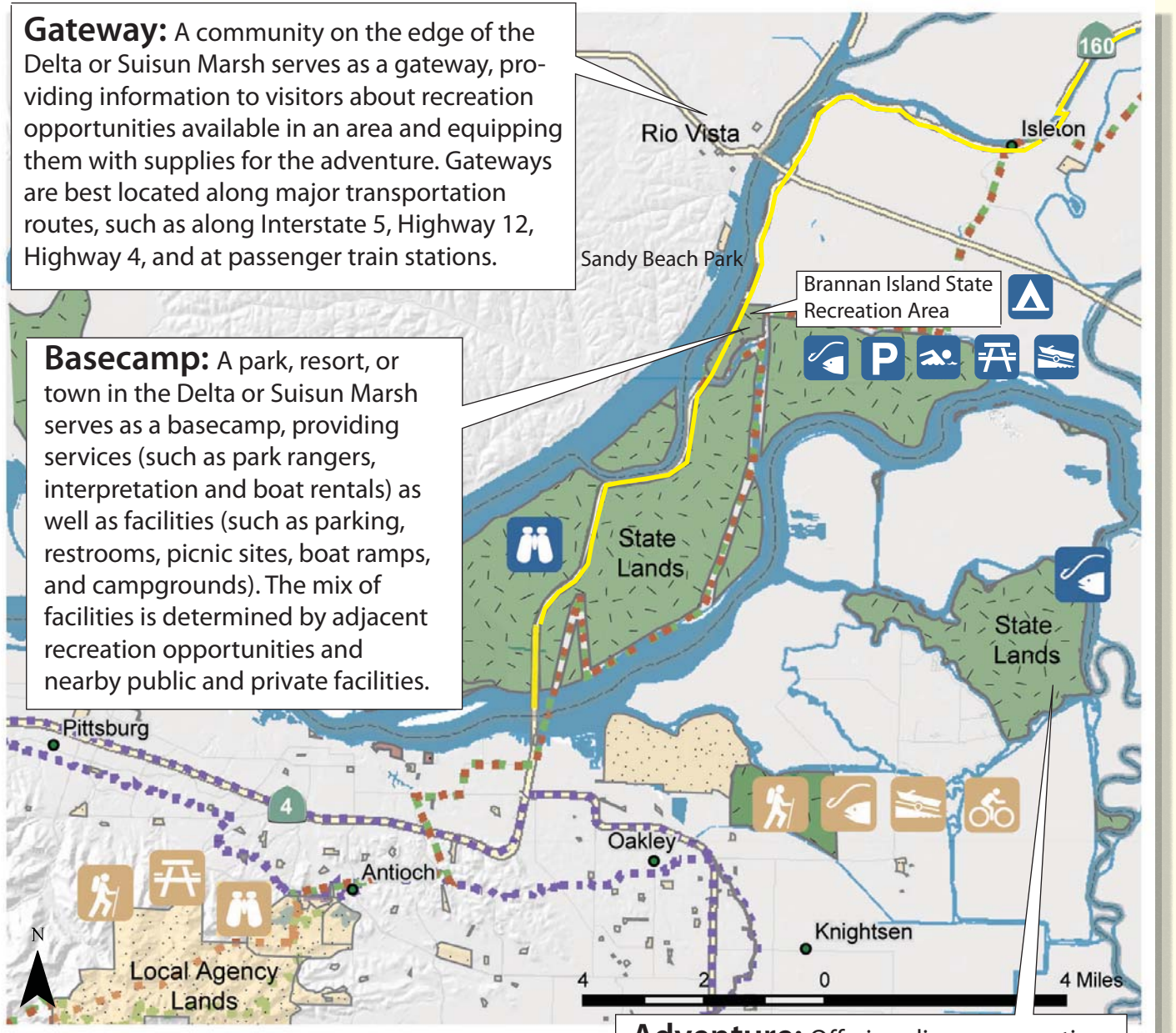
*the road. This year I want to learn to sailboard! The last day of our vacation, we invite our friends and neighbors in Stockton to a huge barbecue and campfire. We have a volleyball tournament, swim and have kite fights—whatever people want to do. Why vacation far away when you can get away to the Delta and invite your friends, too?"*

This story describes an excursion that is possible today or could be possible as additional recreation opportunities are developed.

**The Gateway-Basecamp-Adventure strategy.** To help more people discover and enjoy the Delta and Suisun Marsh area’s recreation opportunities while reducing costs, this proposal recommends the strategy illustrated here.

**Gateway:** A community on the edge of the Delta or Suisun Marsh serves as a gateway, providing information to visitors about recreation opportunities available in an area and equipping them with supplies for the adventure. Gateways are best located along major transportation routes, such as along Interstate 5, Highway 12, Highway 4, and at passenger train stations.

**Basecamp:** A park, resort, or town in the Delta or Suisun Marsh serves as a basecamp, providing services (such as park rangers, interpretation and boat rentals) as well as facilities (such as parking, restrooms, picnic sites, boat ramps, and campgrounds). The mix of facilities is determined by adjacent recreation opportunities and nearby public and private facilities.



**Adventure:** Offering diverse recreation activities may entice more visitors to stay longer, visit for the first time, or visit more often. Visitors may take scenic roadways, multi-use trails, water trails, and heritage corridors to nearby hiking, wildlife viewing, angling, hunting, and other activities on public and private land, as well as tour heritage and agritourism sites.

- Public Lands**
- Local Agency
  - State
  - State Scenic Highways
- State Recreational Trails:**
- Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail (NHT)
  - Mokelumne Coast-to-Crest Trail
  - American Discovery Trail

**The Importance of Partnerships.** The Gateway-Basecamp-Adventure strategy relies on partnerships and collaborations among agencies, businesses, and nonprofits to attract visitors, increase access to recreation opportunities, and minimize cost.

This proposal emphasizes State responsibilities; however, many regional stakeholders have an interest in recreation, from fishing guides to county governments. East Bay Regional Park District, for example, has several parks and trails on the Delta's Contra Costa County shoreline. Solano County's Sandy Beach County Park offers camping and access to the Sacramento River, and its Belden Landing Water Access in Suisun Marsh includes a boat ramp, bank fishing, and wildlife observation trail. Cities also provide Delta access and recreation opportunities. Stockton, for example, offers waterfront access, boating facilities, and day-use areas on its downtown waterfront and at Morelli Park, Louis Park, and Buckley Cove. West Sacramento is opening its riverfront with a river walk and other parks, trails, and attractions. Suisun City provides a gateway to Suisun Marsh. Collaboration among stakeholders cost-effectively enhances recreation opportunities, strengthens the economy, and allows agencies to adapt to changing programs and budgets.

**Broad Recommendations.** Listed in the next column are broad recommendations that serve the overall Gateway-Basecamp-Adventure strategy. Working together, agencies, businesses, and nonprofits can implement these and other ideas. For specific recommendations see the Recommendations and Outcomes section later in this report.



***Delta Marina.** The contributions of many partners will help realize the vision for recreation described in this proposal.*

**Build a Delta brand.** Build a Delta and Suisun Marsh "brand" for products, events, and tourism facilities. Improve the capacity of regional agencies to lead and coordinate cooperative efforts to provide a voice for recreation and tourism and raise funds for regional efforts.

**Provide directions.** Establish water trails and interpretive facilities in the region and boating destinations such as boat-in campsites. Improve signage and other information to help new visitors explore backroads and waterways, which connect gateway communities to recreation basecamps.

Provide interpretation and education on natural resources at recreation facilities. Offer volunteer opportunities and partnerships for events, facility construction, and management.

**Diversify activities.** Protect, restore, and interpret heritage resources, including examples of historic industrial, military, water infrastructure, and transportation uses. Increase opportunities to view wildlife

and the natural landscape and rebuild sport fishing and hunting stocks by restoring natural habitat and improving water quality. Increase the size and diversity of public lands suitable for recreation and waterways as the landscape and economy evolve and opportunities arise. Provide recreation opportunities for visitors of various lifestyles, interests, and budgets.

**Minimize costs by seizing multi-use opportunities.** Target investments to maximize recreation opportunities on existing public lands and minimize impact on resources. Integrate recreation into other area projects, such as water supply, ecosystem restoration, and flood control projects. After disasters, consider recreation as an alternative use if deeply flooded islands are too expensive to reclaim.

## Existing Recreation Demand



**Use of State Parks.** Figures for Fiscal Year 2008-2009 show that at Brannan Island SRA about 25,300 people camped and about 93,100 used day-use facilities. About 37,800 people enjoyed day-use facilities at Bethany Reservoir SRA, and about 17,700 visited Franks Tract SRA.

**California State Parks Abbreviations.** Abbreviations for state parks in this document are:

- SHP (State Historic Park)
- SP (State Park)
- SRA (State Recreation Area)

About 5 million people live within about a 20-minute drive of the Delta and Suisun Marsh, the typical distance Californians drive to reach a favorite recreation area. These residents and other visitors can reach the Delta conveniently via Interstates 5, 80, 205, or 680, State Highways 4, 12, 84, 113, 160, or 220, county roads, navigable rivers, Amtrak, or public transit.

**Fun with Family and Friends.** Many of the most popular forms of outdoor family recreation statewide are available in the Delta and Suisun Marsh, including picnicking and camping in parks, biking its rural roads, and pleasure boating and swimming in waterways. Participation in these activities is widespread. A recent survey showed that more than 90 percent of Central Valley and San Francisco Bay Area residents had visited parks in the last year; about two thirds had done so in the last month. In fact, a typical resident in these regions visited a park about six days each month. One survey shows that popular, family-oriented activities of these areas' residents include walking and picnicking (65 percent of respondents), camping (45 percent), wildlife viewing (40 percent), bicycling (35 percent), and swimming (30 percent).

Demand for these activities is significant. For example, about 17 million Californians (47 percent) day hike on trails, 13 million (36 percent) bike on paved trails, 5.8 million (16 percent) bike on unpaved trails and 4.1 million (11 percent) stay in an RV/trailer or go camping annually. California's children and youth say they want to more frequently ride jet skis (45 percent), play on a beach (44 percent), waterski or wakeboard (42 percent), or go swimming (41 percent) or camping (41 percent).

**A Boating Lifestyle.** The Delta and Suisun Marsh waterways are especially inviting to boaters. An estimated 7.4 million "annual visitor boating days" occurred in the Delta and Suisun Marsh in 2010. Fifteen percent of Bay Area and Central Valley residents go power boating annually, 18 percent go paddle boating, and 7 percent sail boats. About 810,000 vessels are registered statewide, with 116,000 in the five-county area, creating a large pool of potential recreationists.

Powerboats are popular in the Delta. According to one survey, in 1995 69 percent of boat owners owned one or more powerboats; the average number owned by respondents was 1.3. For some, boating is part of a waterfront lifestyle that may also include a



## Delta Adventures: A Boating Lifestyle

*"Mary and I joined my colleague Jill and her spouse Marty for a day cruising the Delta on their new motoryacht. We left the marina early after stowing our lunches and drinks in the galley. Marty piloted us through the winding sloughs to meet up with other boaters at a secluded anchorage. We dove from the boat's transom*

*platform to swim in the slough. On our return trip, we moored at a resort with a guest dock for cool drinks and a snack of fish tapas. What a beautiful day: shimmering water, sunshine, a cooling breeze, the waterside scenery, and Mt. Diablo's silhouette on the horizon. We even saw a sea lion!"*

This story describes an excursion that is possible today or could be possible as additional recreation opportunities are developed.  
(Photos by Bill Wells, [www.californiadelta.org](http://www.californiadelta.org))



**Interstate and International Tourism.** *The San Francisco Bay Area is a national and international draw for leisure and business travelers.*

*With 2 million international visitors in 2009, San Francisco is the fifth-most-popular tourist destination among US cities. San Francisco is within a one-hour drive of many Delta attractions.*

*Long-distance travelers are drawn by a diversity of recreation opportunities, including new sites and events that can bring them back to a region and encourage them to stay longer. The many attractions of the Delta and Suisun Marsh entice these visitors to add a memorable Delta recreation experience to their visit.*

*The typical international tourist spends about \$4,000 per trip. The International Trade Administration projects that international travel will increase 6 to 9 percent annually through 2015.*

dockside home fronting a slough or channel, membership in a boating club, and friendships originating in regattas, boat races, or cruising excursions.

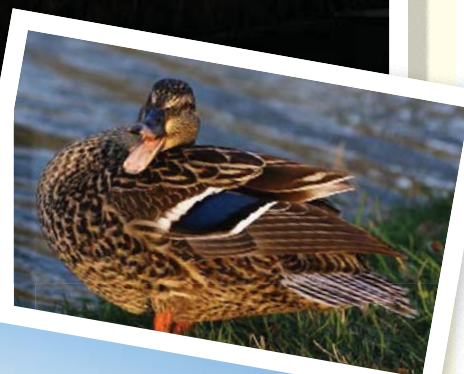
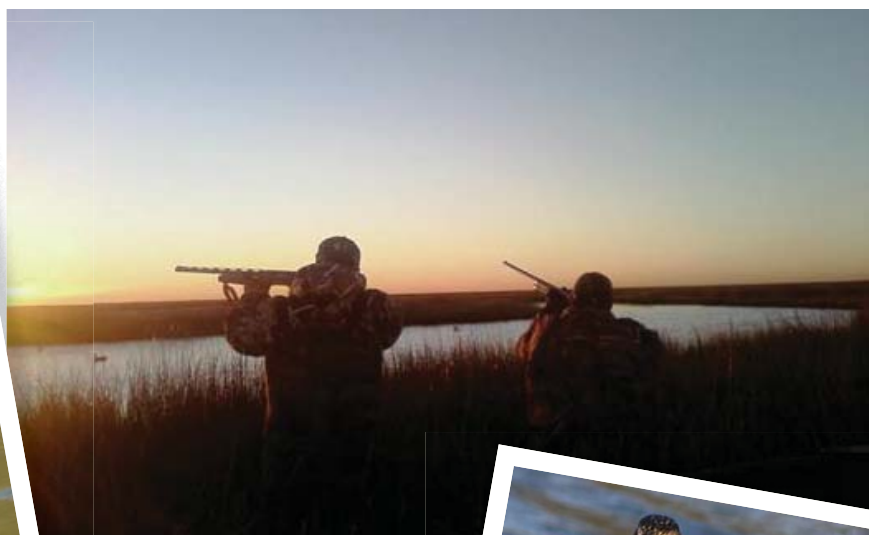
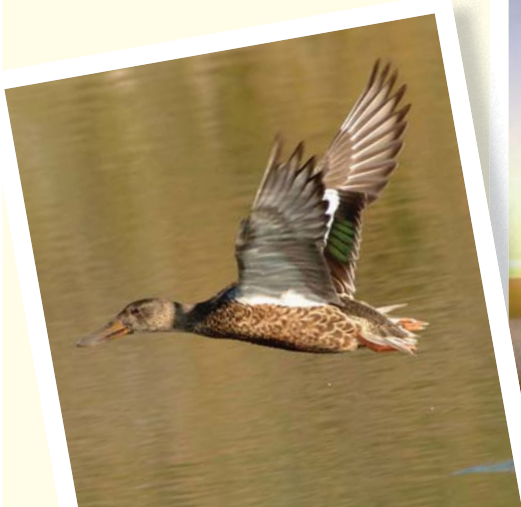
**Nature-Based Recreation.** The Delta and Suisun Marsh are renowned for bird watching, angling, and waterfowl hunting. More than 40 percent of Bay Area and Central Valley residents enjoy bird watching and other wildlife viewing. More than 34 percent participate in outdoor photography. About one in five San Francisco Bay Area residents goes angling, and about one out of three Central Valley residents enjoys the sport. Striped bass have been the main catch in the region, but anglers take many other species, including black bass, catfish, salmon, and sturgeon.

Waterfowl hunting is superb, especially in Suisun Marsh. Hunters also pursue upland game, turkey, deer, and pigs. Although hunting is less popular than many activities (about 3 percent of Central Valley and San Francisco Bay Area residents hunt), its adherents are active and loyal, hunting about 15 days a year, with most participants (77 percent) hunting every year for many years in a row. Hunting is especially popular in the Central Valley (5.6 percent), when compared to its popularity statewide (3.8 percent).

**Food-, Wine-, and Heritage-Related Activities.** Settlers from many countries created a rich cultural legacy that is evident in the historic communities found along the region's rural roads and waterways. Urban areas display the ports, railroads, and heavy industries that powered their economies in the 20th century. Area residents continue to celebrate festivals and other cultural traditions. Abundant produce, local wineries, and ethnic cuisines offer the potential for unique dining experiences.

Many residents of surrounding regions enjoy recreation opportunities associated with area culture: more than 60 percent enjoy driving for pleasure, more than 54 percent visit historic or cultural sites, and more than 50 percent attend festivals, historic reenactments, or other outdoor cultural events. Interest in tours that feature industrial sites and ports is growing in other parts of the US, Europe, and Japan, but here the region's railroading history is emphasized.

Cultural travel activities, including attending festivals, craft fairs, and art exhibits, visiting historic sites and museums, and attending concerts, plays, and dances make up 13 percent of overnight travel statewide.



## Delta Adventures: Hunting Excursion

*"Waterfowl of all kinds stream down the Pacific Flyway to spend the winter here, fattening up in the expansive Delta freshwater wetlands, flooded rice fields, and the brackish Suisun Marsh. Renting a duck blind and solar-powered floating campsite for the weekend will get you on the water far away from civilization. With the boat trailered behind*

*your truck, stop in West Sacramento for groceries, ice, ammo, propane, and a couple of new decoys. A pair of experienced hunters with fearless retrievers can bag the limit of pintails, shovelers, and fat Canada geese. Don't forget to pick up gifts for the kids on the way home."*

This story describes an excursion that is possible today or could be possible as additional recreation opportunities are developed.

# Summary of Existing Resources

**Land Area in the Delta.** This table shows the percentage of land for five counties that is in the Delta and Suisun Marsh.

County	Percentage of County Land in the Delta/ Suisun Marsh
Contra Costa	22%
Sacramento	19%
Solano	16%
San Joaquin	35%
Yolo	14%



**Windsurfing at Brannan Island SRA.** Conditions at this state park are ideal for this popular activity.

The Delta and Suisun Marsh offer a wide spectrum of outdoor recreation. Some visitors may prefer to “hide out” in a remote slough or step back in time at a stately old home or quiet river town. Others may choose a waterfront resort or a revitalized urban waterfront with shops, restaurants, and marinas. Recreation in the Delta and Suisun Marsh is casual, with an easy pace and homegrown attractions, not nationwide franchises.

**Public Lands, Facilities, and Programs.** Public lands occupy about 74,000 acres, or 10 percent, of the legal Delta and Suisun Marsh. Also in the legal Delta are 61,000 acres of open water and 57,000 acres of navigable waterways spread over 700 miles of sloughs and winding channels.

Delta and Suisun Marsh lands and waters include California state parks as well as other protected lands (green areas of the map on opposite page): DFG areas, other state lands, federal recreation lands, local parks, and several locations owned by nonprofit conservation organizations. Not all local areas have ample recreation land. Stockton, for example, is among the few large California cities without a significant state or federal recreation area within its borders. Only about 14 percent of the Delta shoreline of fast-growing areas of Contra Costa and San Joaquin counties is publicly accessible, compared to 60 percent of the shoreline of nearby San Francisco Bay.

**Recreation opportunities at public lands.** Parks and wildlife areas support a wide variety of recreation activities, providing opportunities for fishing, hunting, motorized and non-motorized boating, beach play, swimming and windsurfing, wildlife viewing, picnicking, hiking, biking, and tent, RV, and houseboat camping. Some offer trails and options for driving tours, public fishing and hunting access, and visitor/interpretive centers.

**Boating and angling.** Boating and fishing facilities include a few large public marinas with launch ramps, picnicking areas, and trails. Angling is also available at public fishing piers. Public land can also include access to beach and windsurfing areas or areas for bank fishing and hunting.

**Highways and other routes.** Scenic highways, including State Highway 160 and local roads such as the Delta Loop, state recreational trail routes, railroads, and other transportation corridors connect recreation areas, offer scenic vistas, and link to destinations in other regions.







**Restaurants in Legacy Towns.** *Small Delta towns such as Locke and Walnut Grove have locally owned places to grab a bite to eat as part of a leisurely day on the Delta. (Shown here: Sign for Al the Wops restaurant in Locke.)*

**Private Facilities.** Private recreation facilities and other businesses serving visitors also support recreation in the region.

**Marinas.** Privately owned marinas and resorts in the five-county Delta area include almost 100 marinas: 41 small marinas, with fewer than 50 berths; 39 medium marinas, with 50-200 berths; and 18 large marinas, with 200+ berths. Some of these marinas offer camping and picnic facilities and formal fishing access. Many small and medium private marinas and resorts offer cabin rentals; some offer camping, picnicking, boat launches, and houseboat rentals.

**Restaurants, hotels, wineries, and more.** Restaurants, hotels, bed and breakfasts, wineries, galleries, gift shops, and farm stands in riverside towns and gateway communities serve visitors too.

**Excursions by water.** Private excursion vessels departing from Antioch, Pittsburg, Stockton, Sacramento, Suisun City, and Walnut Grove offer additional ways for visitors to explore the region.

**Yacht clubs.** There are 25 private yacht clubs in the Delta: 4 in Sacramento County, 11 in San Joaquin County, 8 in Contra Costa County, and 2 in Solano County. Yolo County has a private sailing club and a private rowing club.

**Duck clubs.** A total of 158 private duck clubs are located in Suisun Marsh, ranging in size from 30 to 3,200 acres. In the Delta a majority of the private duck clubs are located in Yolo County. Additionally, a 4,700-acre upland game bird hunting club operates in Solano County.

**Education and Interpretation Facilities.** Many facilities interpret the region and educate visitors. The new Delta Discovery Center will offer an overview of the region. Nature centers at locations such as the Cosumnes River Preserve, Rush Ranch, and local parks educate students and other visitors about the region's ecology, including its wildlife and fish, and about native California Indians.

Docent-led hikes and boat trips offer guided experiences for visitors. Education about wildlife also occurs at festivals, such as Galt's Winter Bird Festival. Visitors to historic homes, which are especially common in Contra Costa County, can learn about early settlers, especially from other areas of the US. Fewer sites interpret the contributions of immigrants from China, Japan, the Philippines, or other nations.



## Delta Adventures: Bird Watching Safari

*"We took the concierge's advice and booked a low-carbon safari to Suisun Marsh. We'd toured Napa Valley and Yosemite last year and wanted something different to share with our friends at home in London. The Amtrak train took us to Suisun City where we met our guide, Maria. After a delicious crawfish stew at the marina, she brought our kayaks to the public dock and we headed into the tules. We spent two relaxing days at the*

*ecolodge surrounded by birds. Maria brought wine, ice, and fresh Delta produce every morning, grilled fish for dinner, and led us through wetlands full of melodious Suisun song sparrows and other rare birds. Maria knew where to find the best birds without disturbing them. We bought two nature paintings from a waterfront gallery before heading back to San Francisco."*

This story describes an excursion that is possible today or could be possible as additional recreation opportunities are developed. (Photo of Sunset Bay kayakers by Del Davidson via City of Suisun City. Photo of birders courtesy of Yolo Basin Foundation.)



**Delta Agricultural Heritage.** Farming is an integral part of the Delta's identity.



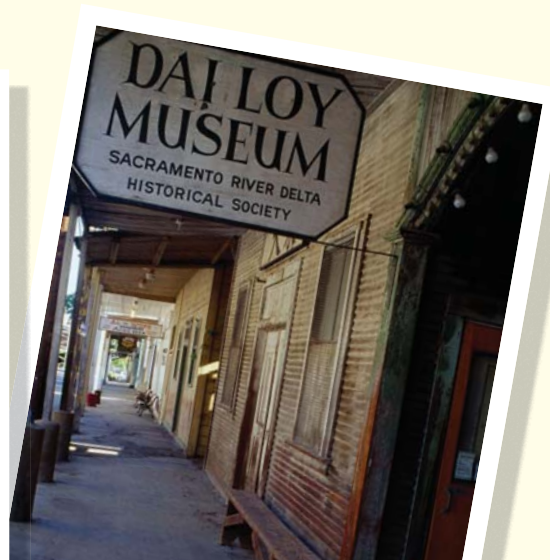
**Heritage Landmarks.** Walnut Grove is just one of the legacy towns that will benefit from heritage tourists' spending.

Museums in San Joaquin and Sacramento Counties interpret agricultural history. County fairs in Antioch and other communities, winery tasting rooms, and farm trails also educate about agriculture. The California State Railroad Museum and the Western Railway Museum present railroads' role in the region. The region's maritime history, such as steamboats, fishing traditions, water management efforts (including marsh reclamation and infrastructure), and other industry currently get little attention.

**Cultural Events.** Festivals honor many ethnic traditions, including Chinese and Cambodian New Years, Portuguese festas, Greek holidays, Indian Diwali celebrations, Filipino fiestas, Cinco de Mayo events, and Juneteenth commemorations. Cook-offs and other festivities celebrate farming, often featuring trademark crops such as asparagus, dried beans, sweet corn, or pears. Many restaurants highlight fresh local produce or cuisines of various ethnic traditions. Fishing derbies publicize angling. Benicia's fine arts and jazz festival, Sacramento's Jazz Jubilee, art museums in Stockton and Sacramento, galleries, and other venues present the arts.

**Heritage Facilities.** The communities of Courtland, Clarksburg, Locke, Walnut Grove, and Isleton evoke the heritage of small towns, agriculture, riverboats, and railroads. Too often, however, the deterioration or loss of important buildings impairs these towns' historic fabric and hinders the reuse of important structures. Pittsburgh is revitalizing its historic city center. Other landmarks include Old Sacramento, including its state historic park, buildings in Stockton, Benicia's arsenal, Concord's Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Monument, and the Benicia Capitol State Historic Park. For some, the heavy industries at the Port of Stockton or Contra Costa shoreline are interesting reminders of the 20th century's economy.

Some historic homes are protected as museums, especially in Contra Costa County, including the John Muir National Historic Site in Martinez. Century farms, many with archetypal drainage and irrigation systems, and classic farmsteads are found along many rural roads. Clarksburg's old sugar mill has been repurposed for wine tasting and events. Historic drawbridges and ferries still traverse some waterways, while remnants of weather-beaten marine facilities hint at robust infrastructure from a past era.



## Delta Adventures: Heritage Tourism

*"I've lived in Silicon Valley for 30 years and never had time to explore the Delta until now. When I heard the Dragon Boat Festival was expanding up the San Joaquin River to Stockton, I booked a room right away. Imagine those boats racing up the river skirting the tule marsh—it reminded me of my childhood! We heard about the cultural tour on Sunday while enjoying some delicious*

*curried asparagus we found at the Delta Discovery Center, so we decided to stay a few more days. We followed the scenic byway signs to explore Locke's historic buildings, Walnut Grove's exhibit on the State Water Project, and Isleton's art galleries. We spent the next day tasting wine, shopping, and dining at Clarksburg's Old Sugar Mill. Next year, we'll bring the grandchildren."*

This story describes an excursion that is possible today or could be possible as additional recreation opportunities are developed. (Grape photo by Dale Goff Photography. Boat tour photo by Cheryl Essex.)

# The Changing Delta

**The Delta’s Population Today.** The five counties with significant land in the Delta and Suisun Marsh—Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo—are home to 3.9 million residents. Residents in these counties are the primary beneficiaries of Delta and Suisun Marsh recreation opportunities. Opinion surveys show that California residents typically drive 20 minutes or less to reach favored recreation areas, bringing Delta and Suisun Marsh recreation opportunities within reach of many of these residents.

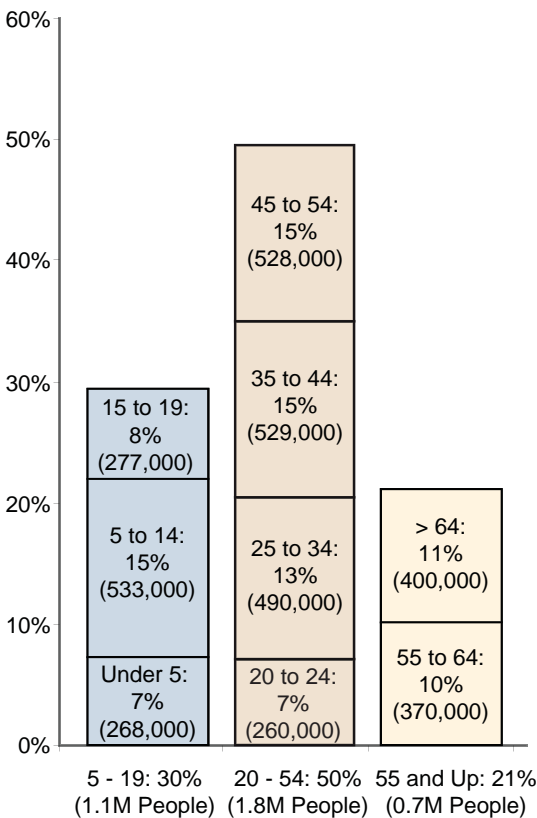
**Age groups.** Residents of the Delta’s five counties are a mix of families with children, active adults, and senior citizens, creating demand for a wide variety of recreation activities. For the five counties:

- Thirty percent of households include children between 5 and 19 years of age. The 5-14 age group is among the region’s largest age groups, comprising almost 15 percent of its population. Another 8 percent are adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age. These are prime audiences for family-oriented recreation such as picnicking, camping, and boating.
- Adults ages 20-44 comprise about one third (35 percent) of the population. These adults are core participants of “fun with family and friends” excursions.
- Adults ages 55 and over make up about 21 percent of the population. People in this age group are likely to enjoy “food and wine” tourism and visiting historic sites, and are likely to prefer hotels, cabins, or other alternatives to camping.

**Ethnicities.** Ethnically, the five counties are made up mostly of people who describe themselves as white (including Hispanic), with the next largest groups being Asian, some other race, and Black or African American. About a quarter of the population of the five counties describes itself as Hispanic. Lifestyle differences among these groups influences recreation demand. For example, Hispanics are more likely to recreate in large family groups, while other ethnic groups are as likely to recreate with friends as family. Hispanics and Asians often prefer more developed recreation areas, while other ethnic groups may prefer more natural, less developed recreation settings.

**Household incomes.** Median income in the five Delta counties is \$63,550 (compared to \$76,257 in the San Francisco Bay Area). As a result, a mix of recreation opportunities at both moderate and higher prices will serve the region well.

**Population and Percentages by Age Group, Five Delta Counties, 2009\***



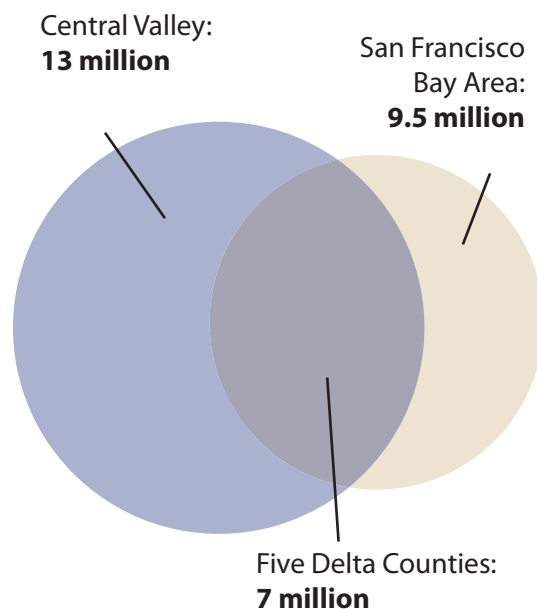
**Age Groups**

\*Rounding yielded more than 100 percent.

**Regional recreation preferences.** Californians' outdoor recreation preferences vary by region. San Francisco Bay Area residents go bicycling more than Californians statewide. Central Valley residents enjoy traditional outdoor activities, such as camping, swimming, hunting, and fishing, more than do residents of the Bay Area or Californians statewide. Paddle boating and wildlife viewing are activities that residents of both the San Francisco Bay Area and the Central Valley participate in more often than Californians statewide. At public meetings in 2008 about the California State Parks System held in the Central Valley, Delta participants said they wanted more opportunities for family access, tent camping (including group camping), boating (including boat launch sites and boating trails), wildlife viewing, photography, and fishing facilities.

**The Delta's Population Tomorrow.** As the Delta and Suisun Marsh region's population increases, recreation demand will grow. The five counties' population is projected to almost double, approaching 7 million by 2050. Over 1 million more residents are expected in San Joaquin County, 735,000 more in Contra Costa County, and 725,000 more in Sacramento County, with fewer additional residents expected in Solano and Yolo counties. Almost 10 million people will live in the San Francisco Bay Area, while the Central Valley's population will swell to 13 million, adding to the demand for Delta and Suisun Marsh recreation. The region's changing ethnic composition may also affect recreation preferences, as Hispanics and Asians will comprise a larger percentage of the population, and the percentage of non-Hispanic whites will decline.

Changing recreation preferences will also affect future demand for outdoor recreation, as the popularity of various recreation activities changes over time. Over the past two decades, for example, data from four studies of Californians' participation in outdoor recreation and projections to 2014 show some types of recreation increasing, while others are in decline. Attending cultural events, picnicking, bicycling on unpaved surfaces, and non-motorized boating show increases in participation, with hunting, freshwater fishing and swimming in lakes, rivers and the ocean projecting the greatest decreases. In some cases declines in recreation participation will be offset by a steady demand from a growing population, while in other cases rising popularity reinforces the increased demand of a growing population.



***Projected Populations in Regions and Five Delta Counties in 2050.***

*Regions are defined in the California State Parks publication, 2008 Survey on Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California. For details, see [www.parks.ca.gov/Planning](http://www.parks.ca.gov/Planning).*



**Recent Delta History.** Starting in the 1850s, farmers began sculpting the landscape to create fields. From fertile soils came asparagus, potatoes, pears, and other crops. Levees, constructed of sediments dredged from sloughs and rivers, protected the islands, tracts, and surrounding lowlands from high water.

Towns as diverse as Clarksburg, Collinsville, Suisun City, Locke, and Rio Vista sprouted on the region's waterways, housing agricultural workers, processing products fresh from the fields and orchards, and becoming transportation hubs for myriad wagons, trucks, trains, and boats hauling goods to market.

Large cities such as Stockton, Tracy, Antioch, Benicia, and Sacramento expanded on the edge of the Delta and Suisun Marsh to take advantage of the abundant water resources, agricultural bounty, and sites for industry.

As the expansive tule marsh was dramatically altered to suit human uses, high-quality habitat for native species became rare.

**The Changing Delta Landscape.** The Delta and Suisun Marsh region is a dynamic landscape, shaped by floods, tides, earthquakes, peat deposition and subsidence, agricultural markets, engineering technology, recreation trends, and public policies. The region will continue to evolve, as it has for centuries, despite huge investments to stabilize this ever-changing environment.

**Effects on recreation of current issues affecting the Delta and Suisun Marsh.** The issues and their effect on recreation include:

- Land subsidence, earthquakes and rising seas may contribute to more catastrophic flooding, which could flood islands, damage statewide and regional infrastructure and local communities, alter recreational and tourism resources, reduce agricultural productivity, and impact the economic health of Delta and Suisun Marsh communities. About 200,00 acres of islands and other land have a 72 percent chance of levee failure in the next 25 years.
- Water quality changes, including increased salinity, may affect the quantity, location, and types of game fish and waterfowl and change riverside vegetation. These changes may also impact agricultural production and the economy of the Delta and Suisun Marsh.
- Changing rain and snow fall patterns may alter river flows, which may affect water-based recreation patterns.
- Aquatic pests and alien species may continue changing the quantity, quality, location, and types of game fish. This may impact the economic health of the recreation/tourist industry in Delta and Suisun Marsh communities.
- Urbanization may consume open space and limit access to the water. It may also increase the number of local recreationists and support for recreation/tourism infrastructure and programs.

**Impacts of future Delta management.** The state's response to current issues affecting the Delta may impact recreation opportunities in the following ways:

- Restoration of fish and wildlife habitat may create new sites for recreation and enhance boating, angling, and hunting.
- Changes in management of existing wetlands may damage facilities and/or change access to existing recreation opportunities.
- Reinforced levees with little vegetation and bulkheads can reduce habitat for sport fish and watchable wildlife, the scenic values of waterways and roads, and bank fishing and birding



opportunities, and may necessitate expensive changes to recreation facilities such as marinas, beaches, and boat launches.

- State Water Project improvements such as diversions, salinity control gates, limited-access canals and other water supply projects may block access to, or change the character of, existing recreation facilities, beaches and waterways. Forebays or other water storage sites may provide new recreation opportunities.
- Re-operation of the State Water Project and Central Valley Project to improve the reliability of water supplies for urban, industrial, and agricultural uses may change downstream water flows that alter recreation patterns and limit boating and may affect the availability of reservoir-based recreation.
- Initiatives to recover fish such as salmon and sturgeon may benefit the economic health of the recreation/tourist industry in Delta and Suisun Marsh communities.
- Programs to minimize movement of alien species may increase policing programs and associated costs and limit boat movement.
- Reductions in levee maintenance may endanger historic resources and infrastructure.



**Scenic Delta Road.** Highway 12 is the main road from Interstate 80/Suisun City through Rio Vista to Interstate 5.



**Delta Waterway.** Over time, most Delta waterways have been contained by levees and crossed by bridges.

# Recommendations and Outcomes

The recommendations here use the Gateway-Basecamp-Adventure strategy to create a network of recreation areas linked by scenic highways and biking, hiking, and boating trails. Implementation of these recommendations should be coordinated with other changes in the region and the availability of funding. Recommendations are organized as follows:

- California State Parks recommendations
- Recommendations for other state agencies
- Trails recommendations
- Proposed National Heritage Area

Key partners are listed for many recommendations.

## California State Parks Recommendations

### Existing California State Parks in the Delta

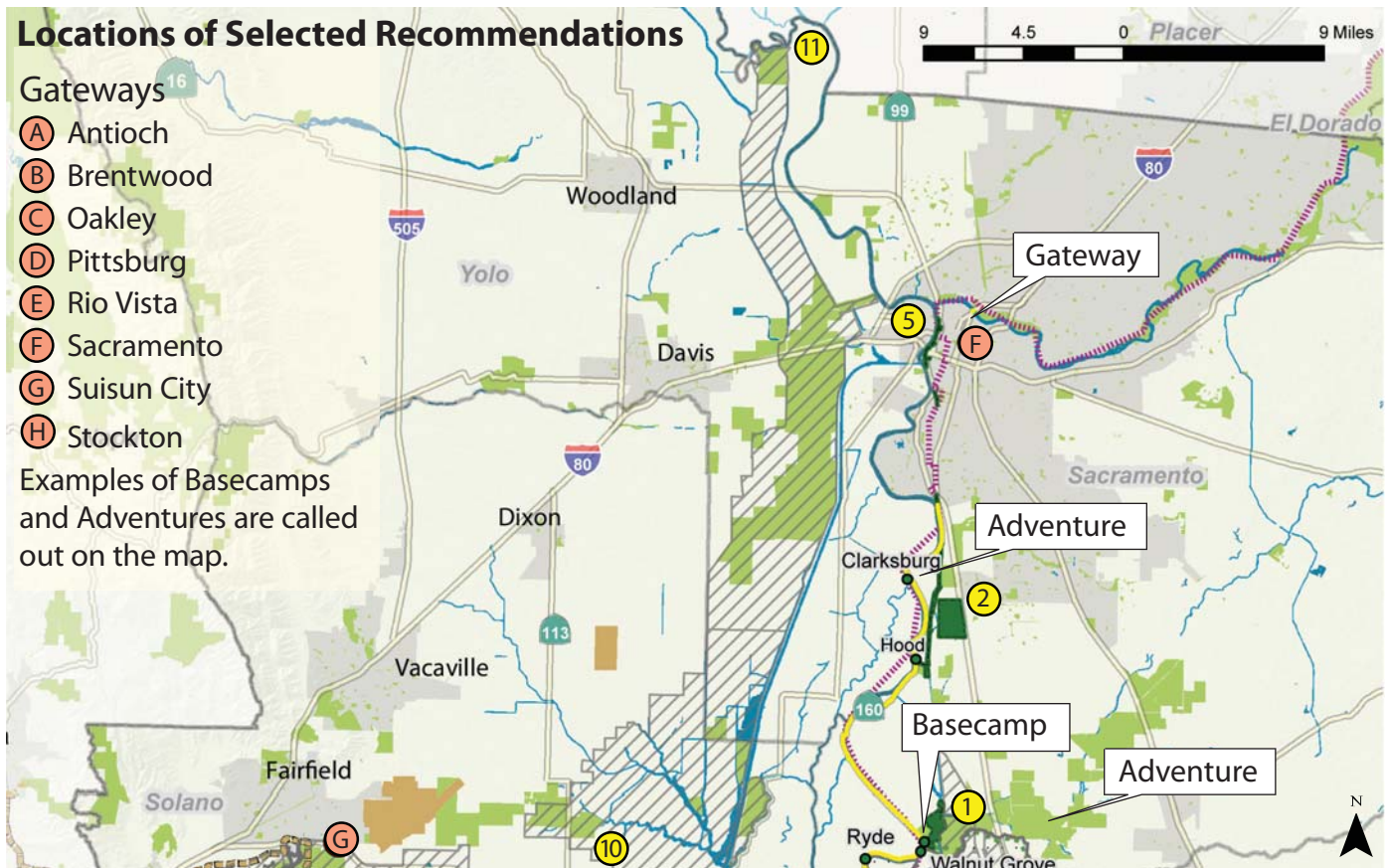
#### 1 Delta Meadows and Locke Boarding House.

Complete park planning to preserve and interpret Delta natural and cultural resources and create a basecamp to explore Locke, Walnut Grove, and the Cosumnes River Preserve:

- Secure additional natural and cultural resources in the

immediate vicinity.

- Develop picnic sites, trails, fishing and water trail facilities, and, when needed, campsites.
  - Connect recreation properties to each other, to scenic Hwy. 160, to the American Discovery Trail, and to heritage and natural resources in the area (Caltrans, Sacramento County, and other property owners).
  - Develop heritage education and interpretation for Locke, the Locke Boarding House, and the Delta Cross Channel control gates (US Bureau of Reclamation and Sacramento County, and Locke stakeholders).
  - Interpret recreation opportunities and natural resources on McCormack-Williamson Tract, Staten Island, and other lands (Cosumnes River Preserve partners).
  - Host special events that highlight nearby heritage and recreation resources, such as historic bridges and buildings (Locke and Walnut Grove stakeholders).
- #### 2 Stone Lake.
- On this park property, continue joint management as wildlife habitat:
- Continue environmental education and interpretation



programs (US Fish and Wildlife Service and environmental organizations).

- Consider connecting to the California Recreational Trails System.

③ **Brannan Island SRA.** Maintain as a basecamp to explore the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, including Franks Tract SRA, and public lands on Twitchell, Sherman, Lower Sherman, and Decker Islands:

- Rehabilitate and expand angling, picnicking, swimming, and camping opportunities.
- Provide visitor information on surrounding public lands and waters (Central Delta stakeholders).
- Rehabilitate and expand boating facilities, provide water trail information, and rehabilitate and restore the windsurfing area, if feasible (Sacramento and Solano Counties, DFG, and DBW).
- Connect park facilities to Highway 160 and the California Recreational Trails System (Caltrans).
- Consider strategic partnerships to increase affordable recreation opportunities for families.
- Connect visitors to recreation opportunities at Decker, Twitchell, Sherman, and Lower Sherman islands such as bank fishing, birding, hiking, bicycling, or hunting on

publicly-owned levees (DWR and DFG).

④ Explore partnerships at **Franks Tract SRA** to increase boating, fishing, and hunting opportunities and enhance boating safety.

**Existing California State Parks outside the Delta**

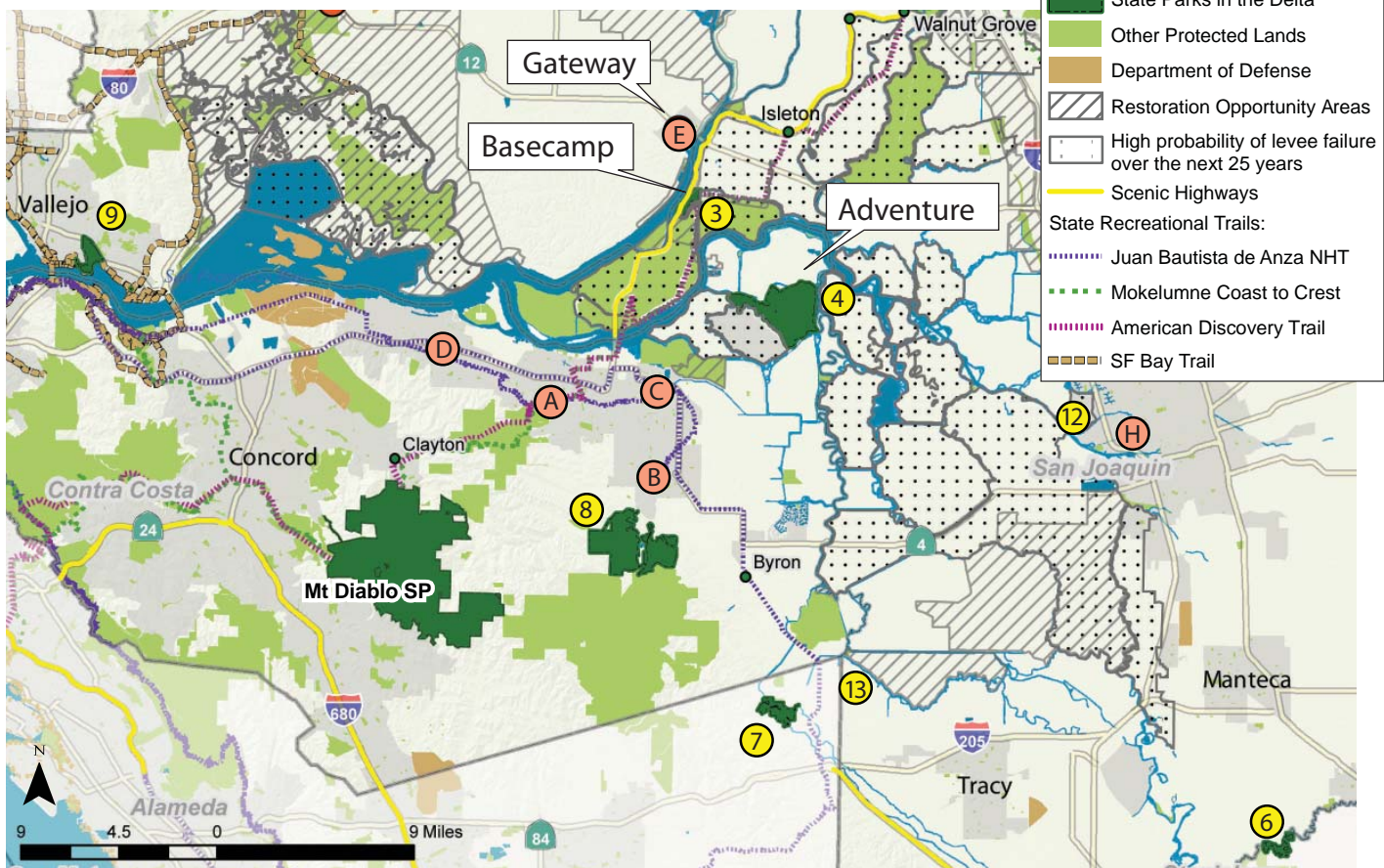
Parks outside the Delta and Suisun Marsh could potentially serve as gateways or basecamps for visitors exploring the region (see page 6).

⑤ **Old Sacramento SHP and California Indian Heritage Center:**

- Develop or enhance waterfront facilities where feasible, including excursion-boat berthing serving the Sacramento River and Delta.
- Interpret a Sacramento River water trail (Old Sacramento stakeholders and DBW).
- Interpret heritage and environmental resources.
- Restore and interpret historic structures.
- Establish an excursion train and multi-use trail from the California State Railroad Museum south toward the Delta using existing railroad rights-of-way.

⑥ **Caswell Memorial SP:**

- Secure additional land for recreation facilities.
- Protect, enhance, restore, and interpret this wildlife habitat.





**Picnicking at Caswell Memorial State Park.** The group picnic area offers a shady respite from the summer heat.

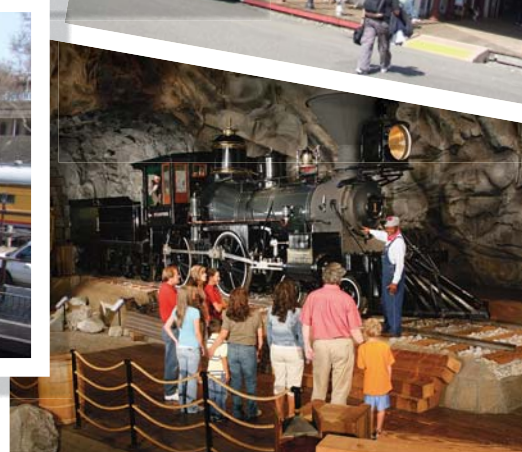
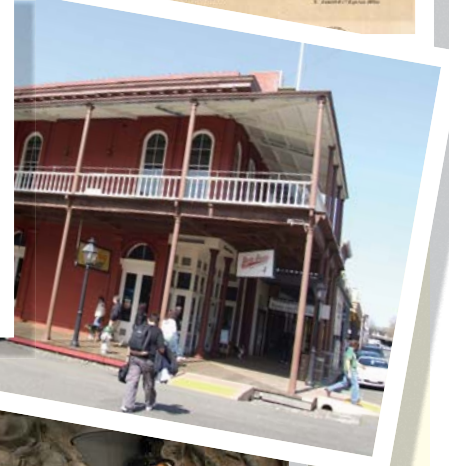
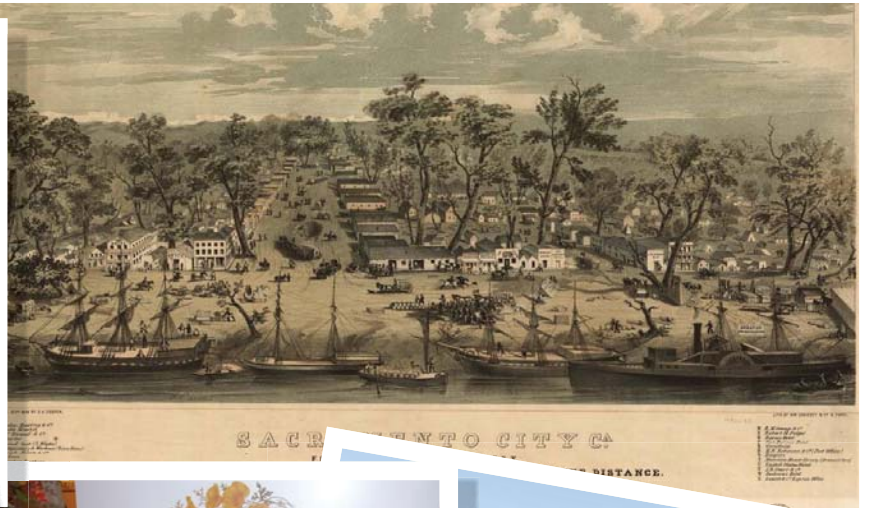
- Increase camping, angling, and picnicking opportunities for families.
- Partner with Stanislaus County stakeholders to develop a Stanislaus River water trail extending to confluence with San Joaquin River.
- ⑦ **Bethany Reservoir SRA.** Increase picnicking, angling, and camping opportunities as well as interpretation of the State Water Project (DWR).
- ⑧ **State Historic Park at John Marsh/Cowell Ranch:**
  - Preserve the historic John Marsh home.
  - Develop campsites, picnic sites, special-event facilities, and trails as well as education and interpretive services.
  - Connect the park to the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail, and the American Discovery Trail, if feasible.
- ⑨ **Benicia Capitol SHP and Benicia SRA:**
  - Develop water trail interpretation of the heritage, recreation, and environmental resources of the Delta, Carquinez Strait, and San Francisco Bay (Solano County stakeholders and DBW).
  - Provide information and interpretation on regional history and heritage tourism.

#### **Potential Future State Parks in the Delta-Suisun Marsh Region**

- ⑩ **Barker Slough.** Restore wildlife habitat and develop picnic sites, trails, facilities for kayaks and other small paddlecraft, and interpretive services (DFG, Solano County, and DBW).
- ⑪ **Elkhorn Basin:**
  - Create a basecamp by partnering with landowners on the Sacramento River to secure about 1,500 acres and restore habitat at this northern end of the Yolo Bypass.
  - Provide campsites, picnic sites, trails, fishing, and interpretive services (land trusts, Yolo County, and others).
- ⑫ **Wright-Elmwood Tract.** Evaluate the feasibility of a new state recreation area adjoining Stockton on the 1,300-acre Wright-Elmwood Tract to provide Delta access and recreation and to restore habitat (Stockton stakeholders, DFG).
- ⑬ **South Delta (possibly in the Old River area):**
  - Explore the potential to create a basecamp on an upland area of about 200 acres using construction spoils, and develop picnic sites, trails, and education and interpretive services, and, when needed, campsites.
  - Interpret a water trail connecting to the San Joaquin River (DFG, DBW, and San Joaquin County).

#### **Other California State Parks Programs**

Continue grant and technical assistance programs to support local agencies that provide Delta access, recreation, resource protection, and environmental education.



# Delta Adventures: Old Sacramento Adventure

*"The horse-drawn carriage clattered over cobblestone streets past authentically-restored brick buildings full of shops on the way to the Railroad Technology Museum. A young boy pulls his mother by the hand to Old Sacramento's sunken ship exhibit, saying 'You won't believe what I saw on yesterday's Gold Rush field trip!'"*

*They stopped at a gift shop to buy Grandpa a railroad cap, then wandered over to a waterfront restaurant for fish 'n' chips. The duo spent the afternoon at the Delta Museum, learning the history of this important region. 'Hmmm,' Mom thinks, 'maybe Dad and I will explore the Delta with Chris and Kim when they visit next month!'"*

This story describes an excursion that is possible today or could be possible as additional recreation opportunities are developed. (Historic image of the City of Sacramento used with permission of the US Library of Congress.)



**Floating Campsite or Day-Use Area.**

*Use of floating facilities such as campsites, toilets, and picnic sites would allow placing such facilities within restored tidal wetlands in the Delta and Suisun Marsh. Visitors could spend a full day or more in the wildest parts of the region with little impact. (Photo shows floating campsite at Lake Oroville SRA.)*



**Hunting Programs.** *Boat-in waterfowl hunting could be expanded with rental programs for floating waterfowl blinds in appropriate areas. Nearby parks or marinas could offer boat launching, camping, cabins, cleaning stations, refrigerated storage, and provisions. (1970s photo.)*

**Recommendations – Other State Agencies**

**California Department of Fish and Game (DFG):**

- Incorporate recreation into proposed Bay Delta Conservation Plan restoration areas, providing boat-in campsites, floating toilets, docks, fishing piers, and other facilities where feasible.
- Explore recreation potential for the Cache Slough complex. Acquire flooded islands as feasible and develop them for environmental restoration and outdoor recreation, primarily wildlife observation, boating, fishing, and hunting. Coordinate with DWR, Yolo and Solano Counties, and landowners.
- Investigate the addition of recreation facilities as part of an expanded San Joaquin River floodplain at Mossdale/Vernalis.
- Improve environmental interpretation of wildlife areas and ecological reserves, including Yolo Bypass, Suisun Marsh/Grizzly Island and Lower Sherman Island Wildlife Areas, and Woodbridge Ecological Reserve.
- Consider partnering with Suisun City, Solano Land Trust, private duck clubs, and others on an ecotourism program promoting low-carbon excursions by Amtrak from the Bay Area to Suisun Marsh and Bay and Suisun City businesses. Collaborate with agencies, nonprofit partners, private landowners, and businesses to expand other wildlife observation, angling, and hunting opportunities where feasible.

**California Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW):**

- Continue providing boating facilities, including launching facilities, public visitor docks, boat-in day use and overnight facilities, vessel pumpout facilities, floating restrooms, and floating campsites.
- Develop, with agencies, a regional water trail plan.
- Coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies on an updated marine patrol strategy for the region, a regional invasive species monitoring and prevention plan, and streamlining abandoned and derelict vessel removal.

**California Department of Transportation (Caltrans):**

- Seek National Scenic Byway status for Hwy. 160. Prepare a scenic byway plan that incorporates recreation features such as improved signage and wayfinding, pullouts for interpretation, river access, and bank fishing, and, where feasible sidewalks and/or traffic-separated bikeways to facilitate non-motorized travel and improve regional trails. Construct these facilities in coordination with other highway improvements.
- Interpret Highway 84 historic ferries and the region's historic bridges.
- Provide a roadside rest area with Delta interpretation along a scenic stretch of Interstate 5.
- Support bicycle trails with grants and technical assistance.

**California Department of Water Resources (DWR):**

- Increase access to publicly-owned areas at Twitchell and Sherman Islands with signage and publicity for bank fishing areas, hunting programs, levee-top trails, and environmental education.
- Consider recreation improvements, when feasible, at new State Water Project facilities in the Delta, such as intakes and forebays; incorporate interpretation into proposed water infrastructure.
- Update the California Water Plan to encourage recreation at water management facilities.
- Provide financial and technical support to Integrated Regional Water Management groups for projects that enhance recreation.
- Collaborate with agencies to interpret the State Water Project and US Bureau of Reclamation water conveyance facilities such as the Delta Cross Channel, Banks Pumping Plant, Clifton Court Forebay, and Bethany Reservoir in appropriate locations.
- Consider adding recreation facilities for bank fishing, windsurfing, hunting, and other appropriate activities at Clifton Court Forebay.
- Consider recreation opportunities at flooded islands that cannot be reclaimed cost-effectively after disasters.
- Incorporate shoreline access, trails, boat ramps, hunting opportunities, and interpretive facilities as appropriate in restoration projects at Dutch Slough, McCormack-Williamson Tract, Suisun Marsh, and other sites.

**State Lands Commission:** Develop a strategy for managing the impact of rising seas on docks and marinas in navigable waterways. Maintain, to the extent feasible, navigable waterways.

**Delta Protection Commission:**

- Gain approval for, establish, and manage a National Heritage Area.
- Update the management plan to encourage new development to provide public access to the Delta shoreline unless 1) it is inconsistent with public safety or the protection of fragile resources, 2) adequate access exists nearby, or 3) agriculture would be adversely affected.
- Coordinate completion of the Great California Delta Trail.
- Collaborate with others to enhance agritourism.
- Encourage tourism and enhance visitor services with websites, maps, and events, and support technical assistance and training for businesses.

**Delta Conservancy and Coastal Conservancy:**

- Collaborate with other agencies and nonprofits to develop recreation opportunities in ecosystem restoration areas.
- Cooperate with the Delta Protection Commission to prepare an environmental and cultural education strategy for the region.
- Collaborate with State and local agencies including the Delta Protection Commission and businesses to promote recreation and tourism that support Delta economic sustainability.



**Levee- and Road -Related Recreation Opportunities.** Options include:

- **Recreation access on levees.** State agencies with publicly-owned and -maintained levees could incorporate, where feasible, recreation access for bank fishing, trails, nature observation, and hunting during levee improvement and maintenance activities. Steps and/or ramps from levee-top parking to fishing stations below offer safer access for anglers.
- **Highway observation/interpretation facility.** An observation area immediately adjacent to busy Interstate 5 overlooking a natural area could introduce hundreds of thousands of business and pleasure travelers to the Delta’s unique ecosystem.



**State Recreational Trails.** These include hiking, biking, riding, and boating trails and heritage corridors designated by California State Parks' director pursuant to Public Resources Code 5070-5077.8. State recreational trails link tourism destinations and cities to recreation areas in many ownerships. While some routes are fully improved, along others planning is incomplete, right-of-ways are still being secured, and facilities are only partly constructed. California State Parks owns trail rights-of-way only through its parks but provides technical assistance and training to the trails' local managers and grants funds for trail improvements. (Above: logos of the Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail and the American Discovery Trail.)



**Non-motorized Boating.** Participation in this activity has been increasing. Encouraging development of Delta water trails is a great way to support this trend.

## Trails Recommendations

**California Recreational Trails System.** Complete the California Recreational Trails System in the Delta. Connect trails to existing recreation areas that provide facilities such as drinking water, campgrounds, and toilets. Increase promotional activities such as trail events and map distribution. Additional recommendations for individual trails:

**The American Discovery Trail (ADT).** This system of multi-use recreational trails and roads connects the San Francisco Bay Area to the American River and beyond, ultimately extending from coast to coast. Complete planning for and improve the ADT route through the Delta by designating or constructing traffic-separated trails for hiking, bicycle, and equestrian use where feasible, and provide signage and interpretation. Consider using West Sacramento's Clarksburg Branch Line Trail as ADT from West Sacramento to Clarksburg.

**The Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail (MCCT).** This multi-use trail connects the Mokelumne River to the San Francisco Bay Area, often along East Bay Municipal Utility District rights of way. Complete planning for and improve the route through the Delta by designating or constructing traffic-separated trails for multi-use where feasible, and provide signage and interpretation.

**The Juan Bautista De Anza National Historic Trail (Anza).** This shared-use trail and auto route traces the historic route of the Spanish pathfinder from Mexico to San Francisco, skirting the West Delta in Contra Costa County. State and local agencies and the National Park Service should partner to improve signage and interpretation.

**The Bay Area Ridge Trail and the San Francisco Bay Trail** link Contra Costa and Solano counties across the Benicia-Martinez Bridge. Connect these popular routes to Suisun Marsh trails, Delta land and water trails, and nearby recreation lands and facilities.

**Other Major Trail Systems.** Complete multi-modal trails and support facilities for the following long-distance trails, including adding these to the California Recreational Trails System:

**Great California Delta Trail.** Cooperate with the DPC and local agencies such as East Bay Regional Park District to integrate the ADT, MCCT, Anza, and other land and water trails into this network.



**Marsh Creek Trail.** Complete this trail in Contra Costa County, which winds along Marsh Creek from Oakley to the state historic park at John Marsh's home in Brentwood and East Bay Regional Park District's Round Valley Regional Park.

**Sacramento and San Joaquin River Water Trails:**

- Organize and promote river recreation at boat-in campsites and day-use areas at existing parks and marinas. Use guidebooks, events, and the Internet.
- Collaborate with DBW, DFG, DPC, and other organizations on the development of water trail facilities.

**San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail.** Collaborate on the development of water trail interpretation at Benicia SRA to connect this trail to other proposed water trails.

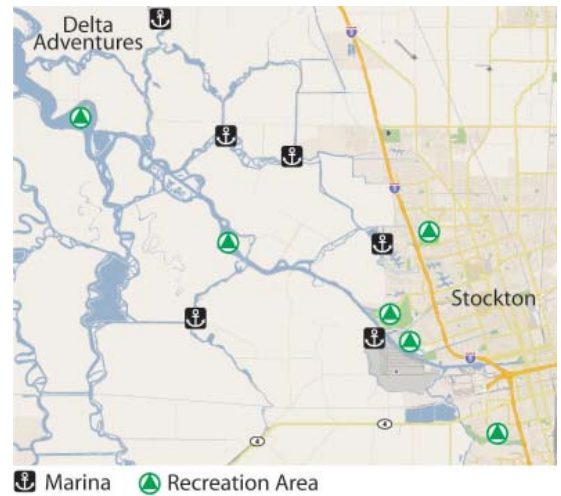
**California Delta Heritage Corridor:**

- The California Delta Heritage Corridor would link historic Delta communities, recreation areas, wildlife and fish habitats, agritourism attractions and festivals, and Delta excursion boats.
- Increase support and cooperation among public agencies for resource preservation, especially if National Heritage Area status is a possibility.
- Partner with Delta stakeholders to improve amenities for visitors, such as maps, brochures, a website, multi-lingual programs, and kiosks.

**Delta/Suisun Marsh Birding Trail.** Connect the region's many Important Bird Areas (as designated by Audubon California) with an auto route. Partner with Delta stakeholders to connect and interpret sites such as Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, Woodbridge Ecological Reserve, Cosumnes River Preserve, Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Jepson Grasslands, Suisun Marsh, Benicia SRA, and Concord Marshes.

**Proposed National Heritage Area (NHA)**

A National Heritage Area is a place designated by the US Congress where natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally-distinctive landscape. An NHA is overseen by a local agency, guided by a locally-developed management plan. Once authorized, an NHA can offer matching grants to public and nonprofit partners to support signage and branding, historic preservation, recreation facilities, or other projects. The DPC should continue to pursue this designation.



**Water Trails.** Agencies and private interests can collaborate to create water trails on the many waterways of the Delta, with stops that include marinas, recreation areas, restaurants, and overnight facilities.



**Smart Buoy.** Buoys similar to this one operated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration could provide wayfinding and interpretation information to boaters. (Photo courtesy of NOAA.)



**Economic Activity in the Delta.** *The purchase of equipment and supplies for day outings helps support local economies.*

*Travel spending in the five Delta and Suisun Marsh counties was \$5.3 billion in 2008. Visitor spending for the arts, entertainment, and recreation retail sales sector (a subset of travel spending) was about \$784 million in the same year, generating almost \$388.7 million in earnings and supporting over 15,000 jobs. About one in six of these jobs is in the Delta, according to a recent study.*

*Sacramento County benefits most from travel spending, followed by Contra Costa and Solano counties. The sector's impact in San Joaquin and Yolo counties is smaller.*

*(Photo by Bill Wells, [www.californiadelta.org](http://www.californiadelta.org).)*

Proposal recommendations were developed with consideration for economic outcomes and quality-of-life contributions of recreation and tourism to the Delta and Suisun Marsh region's economy. These benefits are outlined here.

**Economic Outcomes.** Recreation and tourism contribute significantly to the Delta and Suisun Marsh region's economy. Benefits come from spending on recreation activities, supplies, equipment, and services; the jobs created in recreation and tourism businesses; land management agencies' payrolls; and sales and tax revenues that provide public benefits.

Tourists and residents attracted to the region's parks, waterways, and other recreation areas spend millions of dollars on lodging, food, equipment, and recreation-related services. Spending by agencies that manage recreation lands and waters also contributes to sales and employment. Local and state governments benefit from the sales tax and other revenues generated by this recreation spending and employment.

These expenditures support business and employment. Recreation and tourism may provide unique economic development opportunities for some Delta land uses. For farmers in the Delta and Suisun Marsh region, agricultural tourism creates opportunities to market products directly to consumers, provides alternative uses for lands or facilities not suited to production agriculture, and supplements income. Redeveloping outmoded industrial or port sites into revitalized waterfronts that emphasize shoreline access, recreation, tourism, and waterfront living may attract new residents, visitors, and businesses.

**Spending varies by activity.** Recreationists' spending differs along with their activities. Some per-person expenditures are described here:

- Recreationists enjoying a day with family and friends at state parks similar to Brannan Island SRA spend about \$16 per day, with 58 percent spent in the park and surrounding communities and 42 percent spent more than 25 miles away while traveling to and from the park. About 41 percent is spent on groceries and other supplies, 8 percent on equipment rentals and tours, 6 percent at restaurants, and 43 percent on gasoline and transportation.
- Bicyclists spend about \$11 per day on recreation, about \$24 annually for recreation services, and about \$167 annually for equipment.
- Boaters spend \$41 per day. About 39 percent is spent on groceries, gasoline, and other supplies, 18 percent on equipment

rentals and tours, 27 percent at restaurants, and 16 percent on overnight lodging. Non-motorized boaters spent about \$50 annually for recreation services, and about \$60 annually for equipment. Motor boaters spend more.

- Camping overnight increases visitors' spending. At state parks similar to Brannan Island SRA, campers spend about \$52 per day, with 40 percent spent in the park and surrounding communities and 60 percent spent traveling to and from the park. About 45 percent is spent on groceries and other supplies, 9 percent on equipment rentals and tours, 3 percent at restaurants, 30 percent on gasoline and transportation, and 5 percent on overnight lodging expenses.

- For nature-based recreation, average expenditures for a day of wildlife watching are \$44. Anglers spend about \$41 to \$62 for a day's recreation, and about \$700 on equipment annually. About 33 percent is spent on groceries, gasoline, and other supplies, 16 percent on equipment rentals and tours, 26 percent at restaurants, and 25 percent on overnight lodging. High-quality experiences receive a premium, with expenditures for Central Valley salmon fishing estimated at \$140 per fish. Hunters spend about \$68 per day, and over \$1,000 annually on equipment.

- Visitors at state historic parks spend about \$34 daily, with 41 percent spent in the park and surrounding communities and 59 percent spent traveling to and from the park. For this group, about 19 percent is spent on groceries and other supplies, 7 percent on equipment rentals and tours, 24 percent at restaurants, 27 percent on gasoline and transportation, and 23 percent on overnight lodging expenses. Visitors to agritourism sites typically spend \$10 to \$15 per visit, with winery visitors often spending \$12 to \$15 more per visit.

- Cultural and heritage tourists spend an average of \$994 per trip.

**Ways to increase spending.** As the population grows, demand for outdoor recreation also will grow. Ways to increase recreation's economic contribution to the Delta and Suisun Marsh region include:

- Improving and promoting outdoor recreation to increase residents' outdoor recreation spending within the region, rather than at other destinations, and attract additional visitors from the expanding populations of other parts of the San Francisco Bay Area, the Central Valley, and other areas.

- Increasing the variety of outdoor recreation available, which can broaden recreation and tourism spending in the area and



**A variety of recreation options.** A mix of affordable and higher cost recreation can appeal to residents and visitors alike.



**Ryde Hotel, Walnut Grove.** Built in 1927 at the height of Prohibition, the hotel has been remodeled but retains much of its historic character. Weddings and brunches are promoted on the hotel website.

attract visitors with diverse interests, responding to the increase in ethnic diversity. Variety also encourages visitors to stay longer, experience additional activities, convert lower cost day trips into overnight visits, or add additional days to a visit.

- Offering a mix of affordable and higher cost recreation, which can attract both area residents and visitors from the Central Valley and San Francisco Bay Area, as well as other areas.
- Increasing opportunities for increased visitor spending in the region on items that travelers might otherwise purchase near their homes (for example, recreation supplies and equipment). This can shift visitor expenditures into the Delta and Suisun Marsh region's gateway communities.
- Enhancing and promoting scenic highways and multiuse trails can draw visitors deep into the heart of the Delta and Suisun Marsh. This could create additional opportunities for those providing recreational services, such as equipment rentals, dining, groceries, tours, and other guided experiences.

**Quality-of-Life Outcomes.** Recreation and tourism contribute to the region's quality of life, enhancing its reputation as a good place to live, work, and do business.

- Parks and other open spaces have a positive effect on nearby residential property values, enhancing marketability and leading to proportionately higher property tax revenues for local governments. Communities, particularly those that benefit from recreational activities and tourism, become stronger when their aquatic ecosystems are healthy.
- Flood damage cost is reduced on lands used as parks or open space rather than for development. These open spaces can also reduce the cost of protecting water quality.
- Recreation areas encourage healthy outdoor activity—such as walking or bicycling, thus promoting human health and reducing residents' medical costs.
- Recreation enhances the reputation of the Delta and Suisun Marsh region, branding it as an area of fun, beauty, and opportunity. Visitors, and the marketing and promotional efforts of the area's recreation agencies and tourism businesses, transmit this "brand" far beyond the region, aiding the area's efforts to distinguish itself from its competitors for businesses, customers, residents, and jobs.



## Delta Adventures: Biking Excursion

*"Biking with friends on the Great California Delta Trail reveals the multi-dimensional West Delta. Watch massive ships from Singapore on their way to the Port, race long freight trains full of Valley rice, and photograph tall smokestacks marking power plants and factories that appeal to the kojo moe ("factory lovers"). Antioch Dunes*

*and Big Break Shoreline reveal the pre-industrial landscape, home to plants and wildlife that evolved in this dynamic landscape. Explore the Anza trail route of early Spanish explorers, buy juicy cherries from a roadside stand, then watch the sunset while noshing sturgeon enchiladas on the waterfront."*

This story describes an excursion that is possible today or could be possible as additional recreation opportunities are developed.

## Conclusion



**Local restaurants** are among the many types of businesses that get a boost from tourist spending. Many Delta enterprises have a small-town flavor. (Photo by Bill Wells, [www.californiadelta.org](http://www.californiadelta.org).)

The Delta and Suisun Marsh offer outstanding recreation opportunities. Residents and visitors can play and relax on the region's waters and shorelines, enjoy a lifestyle of boating and waterfront living, find pleasure in nature through wildlife observation, fishing, or hunting, and learn about the region's history and culture at historic towns, farms, museums, festivals, and factories. Millions of Californians and travelers are looking for these outdoor adventures.

Opportunities for recreation will change as the region's landscape responds to current trends and new water management and ecosystem restoration initiatives. Improving public and private recreation facilities and services in communities on the edge of the Delta and Suisun Marsh and connecting them with destinations inside the region will expand residents' and visitors' opportunities. Recreation and tourism can also help sustain the region's economy and enhance its quality of life.

This report's recommendations may remain just a glittering vision, however, without new funds for recreation. California Water Code Sections 11912 and 11913 provide that the state should support recreation associated with the State Water Project, rather than pass recreation's costs on to the project's water beneficiaries. Appropriations, however, have dropped steadily, and are inadequate to operate and maintain the state's existing recreation improvements. Future increases in this funding are not foreseeable. The next water bond scheduled for a 2012 vote, the Safe, Clean and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act, may provide some funds for recreation in the Delta and Suisun Marsh, but only if approved by voters in 2012 or later. The federal government's America's Great Outdoors initiative emphasizes urban parks, river access and water trails, working landscapes, wildlife and fish habitats, and other priorities aligned with this proposal. Its funding, however, depends on uncertain appropriations to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, farm programs, and other federal agencies. The Delta Reform Act establishes a Delta Investment Fund to implement the Economic Sustainability Plan that this proposal supports, but that plan's recommendations are incomplete.

For Californians to enjoy the recreation opportunities of the Delta and Suisun Marsh, recreation funding will need upgrading along with the Delta's water supply facilities and ecosystem. As the master plan for the region is completed, provisions to adequately fund recreation will be essential to attain the Delta and Suisun Marsh's full potential.

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## **Recreation Proposal for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun Marsh**

Created in response to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009 and SBx7 1,  
which amended and added to the Public Resources Code and the Water Code.

Submitted to the Delta Stewardship Council  
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