Delta Wetlands: An Investment in Security

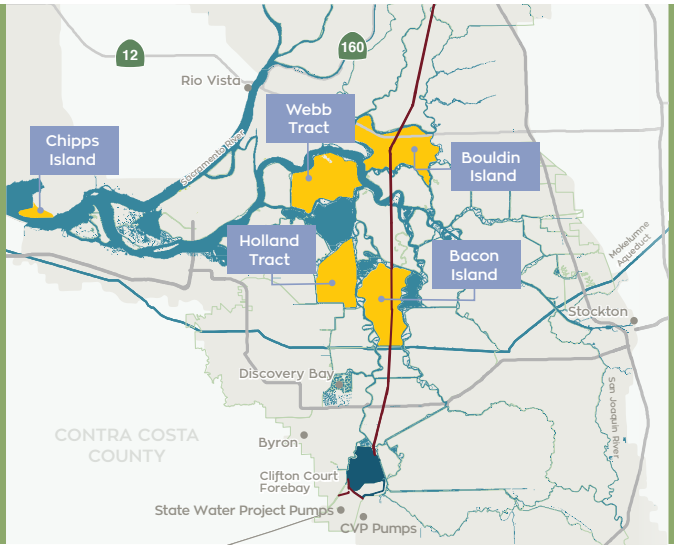
The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is the heart of the statewide water delivery system. Four islands and tracts long controlled entirely or partly by Zurich American Corporation are strategically located in the center of the Delta. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California in March 2016 approved a purchase agreement for these lands and part of a fifth island in the far western Delta. Collectively, the lands known as Delta Wetlands Properties represent an important investment in a crucial part of the Delta for multiple potential values that are consistent with the state's co-equal goals of a restored Delta and a reliable water supply for California.

Today's Delta: Unsustainable Land Practices

Researchers say it took natural processes more than 7,000 years to amass rich peat soils beneath what was once a vast estuary of marshlands. After the Gold Rush, the Delta was steadily converted to a static set of islands by the construction of more than 1,100 miles of levees. Farming these islands has oxidized and eliminated nearly half of the original volume of peat soils. The result is that many Delta islands are now deeply subsided and could quickly flood if levees were to fail, threatening the environment, water quality and water supplies that move through the Delta for 26 million Californians and 3 million acres of productive farmland. Finding ways to sustainably manage these lands is in the interest of Metropolitan, the Delta itself and the rest of the state.

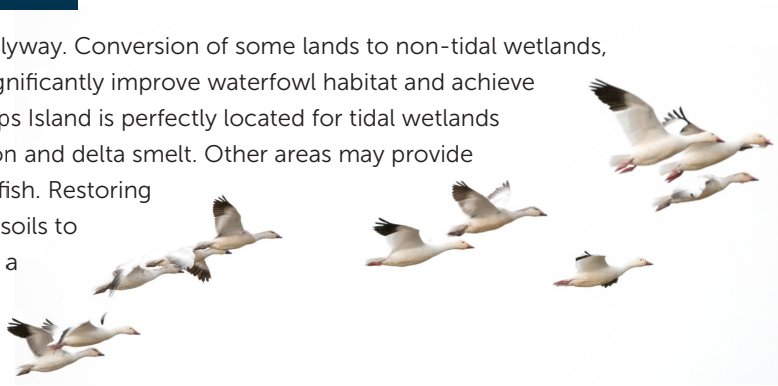
Delta Wetlands: Strategic Locations for Water Supplies, Fish Species

The five islands and tracts that are part of Delta Wetlands are in important locations in the estuary. Water supplies for Metropolitan and the State Water Project pass by four of the parcels in the Central Delta. Chipps Island in the far western Delta, as well as Bouldin Island and Webb Tract are in the migration pathways of important fish species such as salmon and delta smelt.



Environmental Opportunities

The properties of Delta Wetlands are located along the Pacific Flyway. Conversion of some lands to non-tidal wetlands, or preserving cultivated land with food for bird species could significantly improve waterfowl habitat and achieve possible mitigation requirements for these critical species. Chipps Island is perfectly located for tidal wetlands restoration, providing both food and shelter for migrating salmon and delta smelt. Other areas may provide good conditions to develop food production (zooplankton) for fish. Restoring some lands with native tule vegetation would both rebuild peat soils to increase land elevation and reduce carbon emissions, providing a potential offset in the California carbon market and reducing harmful compounds in drinking water supplies.



Today's Uses, Tomorrow's Possibilities

Most of the lands owned by Delta Wetlands have long been farmed with various seasonal crops. As a public water agency looking for long-term stability in the Delta through an enhanced ecosystem and improve water supply reliability, Metropolitan seeks to explore sustainable land management options that are viable in the decades to come.

Water Stability Today

Were Delta levees to fail due to an earthquake or other natural event, an "emergency freshwater pathway" would have to be constructed for fresh watersupplies to move north-to-south through the Delta to the existing pumping facilities of the State Water Project and Central Valley Project. Bacon Island is along this pathway. In addition, Webb and Holland tracts are two of the eight priority islands identified by the state for special protection because of their location in the western Delta, counteracting salt water intrusion. Ownership would help to assure continued progress to prepare for a future emergency response.

EMERGENCY FRESHWATER PATHWAY

Water Stability Tomorrow

California WaterFix proposes to modernize the Delta's water delivery systems with three new intakes in the northern Delta and a twin tunnel pipeline system to move this supply to the existing aqueducts. Bouldin and Bacon Islands are along the path of the proposed tunnel pipeline alignment. Ownership could help assure timely construction. Metropolitan has previously purchased water for transfer from Delta Wetlands, and some supplies may be available for transfer. Maintaining the reliability of existing imported supplies is Metropolitan's primary goal, as conservation and new local supplies in Southern California are anticipated to meet all future needs due to population growth.

Responding to a Changing Climate

As a major steward of the region's water supply resources, Metropolitan has been addressing the challenges of climate change for more than a decade. Previous IRPs have moved toward a comprehensive planning and adaptation strategy. The 2015 IRP builds on these actions with continued progress in the following areas:

- Reducing greenhouse gases
- Developing renewable energy resources
- Conserving water
- Developing local supplies
- Advancing sustainability initiatives

WHO IS METROPOLITAN

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is the Southland's imported water provider for a six-county region with a population of nearly 19 million. From the engineered gravity-flow of the Colorado River Aqueduct, to sustainable water recycling and groundwater replenishment, to today's investments in innovation –Metropolitan thinks ahead.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is to provide its service area with adequate and reliable supplies of high-quality water to meet present and future needs in an environmentally and economically responsible way.

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