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Why the Delta is so important – and the challenges it faces

Executive Officer Jessica R. Pearson



Delta
Stewardship
Council

A CALIFORNIA STATE AGENCY

Overview



What and where is the Delta?



What challenges face the Delta?



Why is the Delta so important to California?



How are we moving forward in the face of these challenges?

**What and where
is the Delta?**

CALIFORNIA'S Sacramento- San Joaquin Delta



Located inland from the San Francisco Bay at the convergence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers



Spans five counties in Northern California: Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo



Supplies a portion of the drinking water for 27+ million Californians



Contributes billions in agricultural products toward the State's economy, the fourth-largest in the world



Provides 750+ plant and animal species with critical habitat along its thousands of miles of meandering waterways



Home to 627,000+ people spread across rural agricultural, legacy, and urban communities

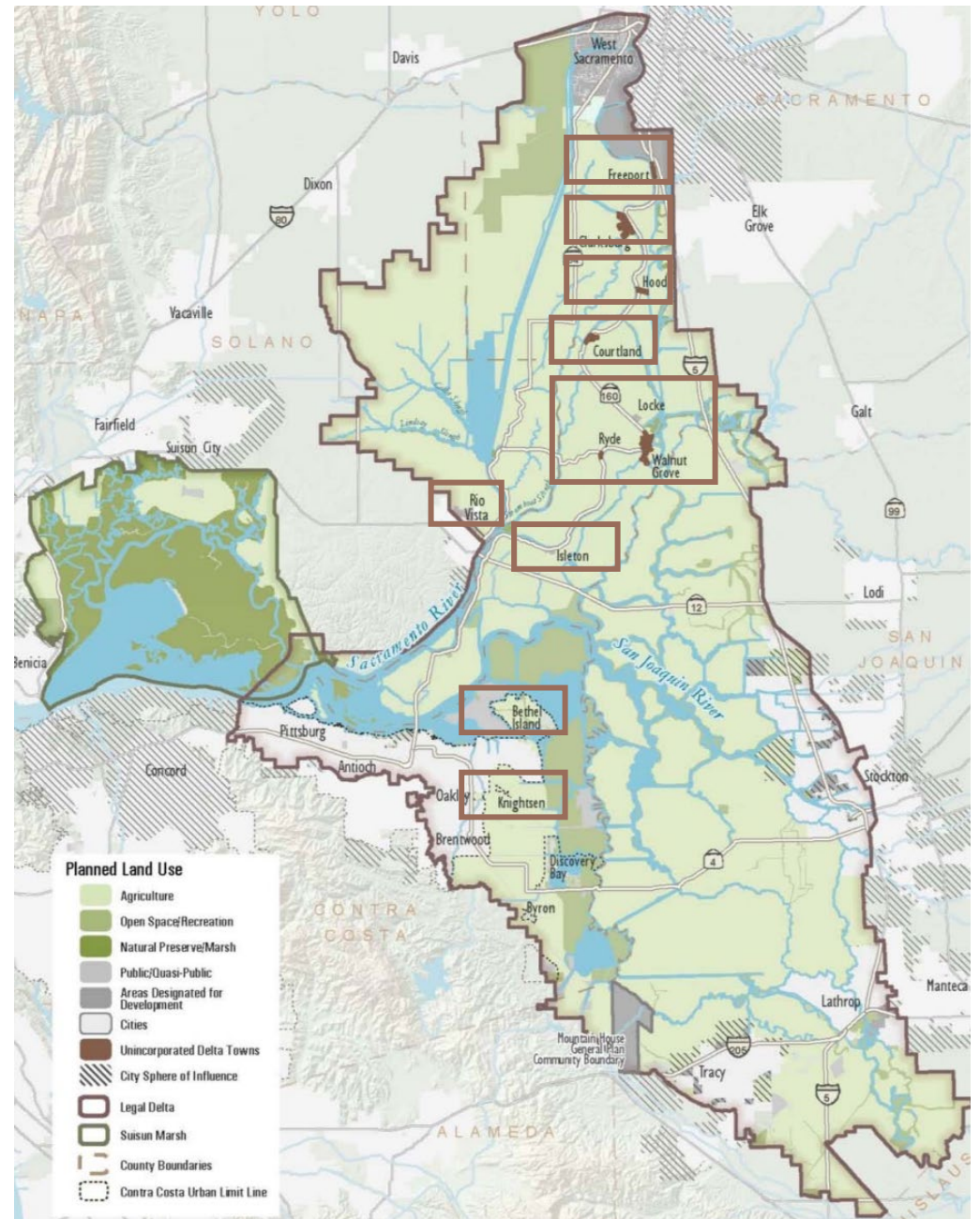


California's first National Heritage Area, as designated by the U.S. Congress



Legacy communities

- Bethel Island
- Clarksburg
- Courtland
- Freeport
- Hood
- Isleton
- Knightsen
- Locke
- Rio Vista
- Ryde
- Walnut Grove

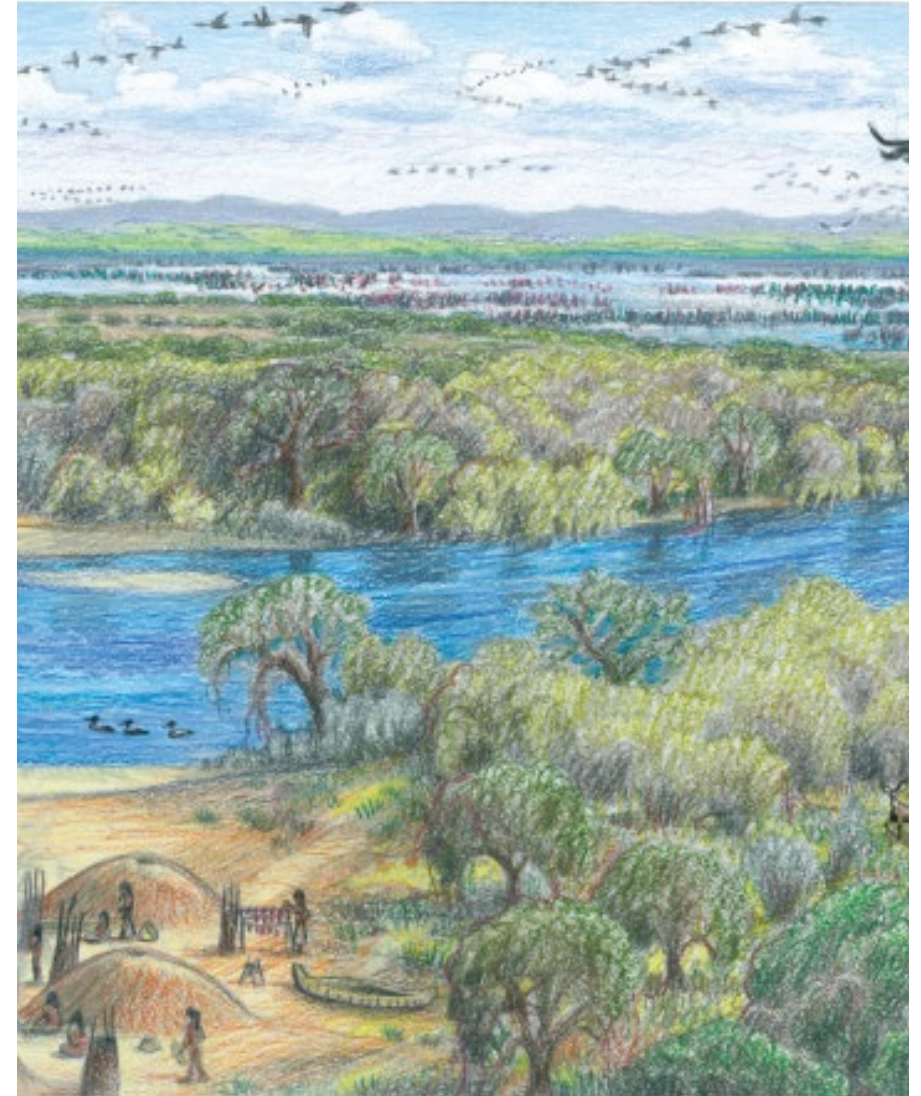


Villages & Tribes

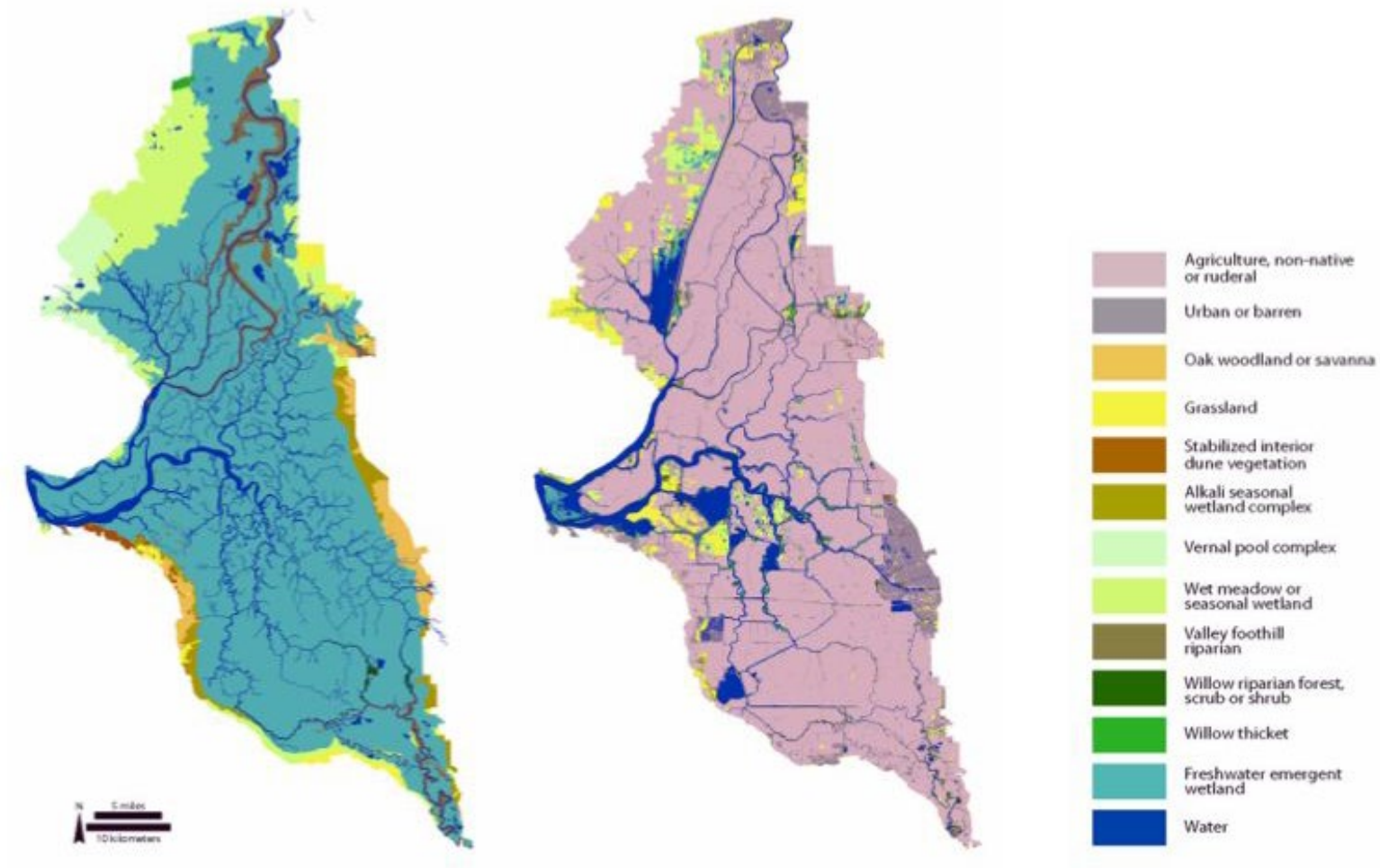
The Delta and its larger estuary are located within the ancestral territory of the Native Peoples of numerous villages and Tribes

- Bay Miwok
- Coast Miwok
- Plains Miwok
- Maidu (Nisenan)
- Ohlone
- Patwin
- Pomo
- Wappo
- Wintun
- Yokuts

Image: Laura Cunningham, SFEI's Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Historical Ecology Investigation: Exploring Pattern and Process

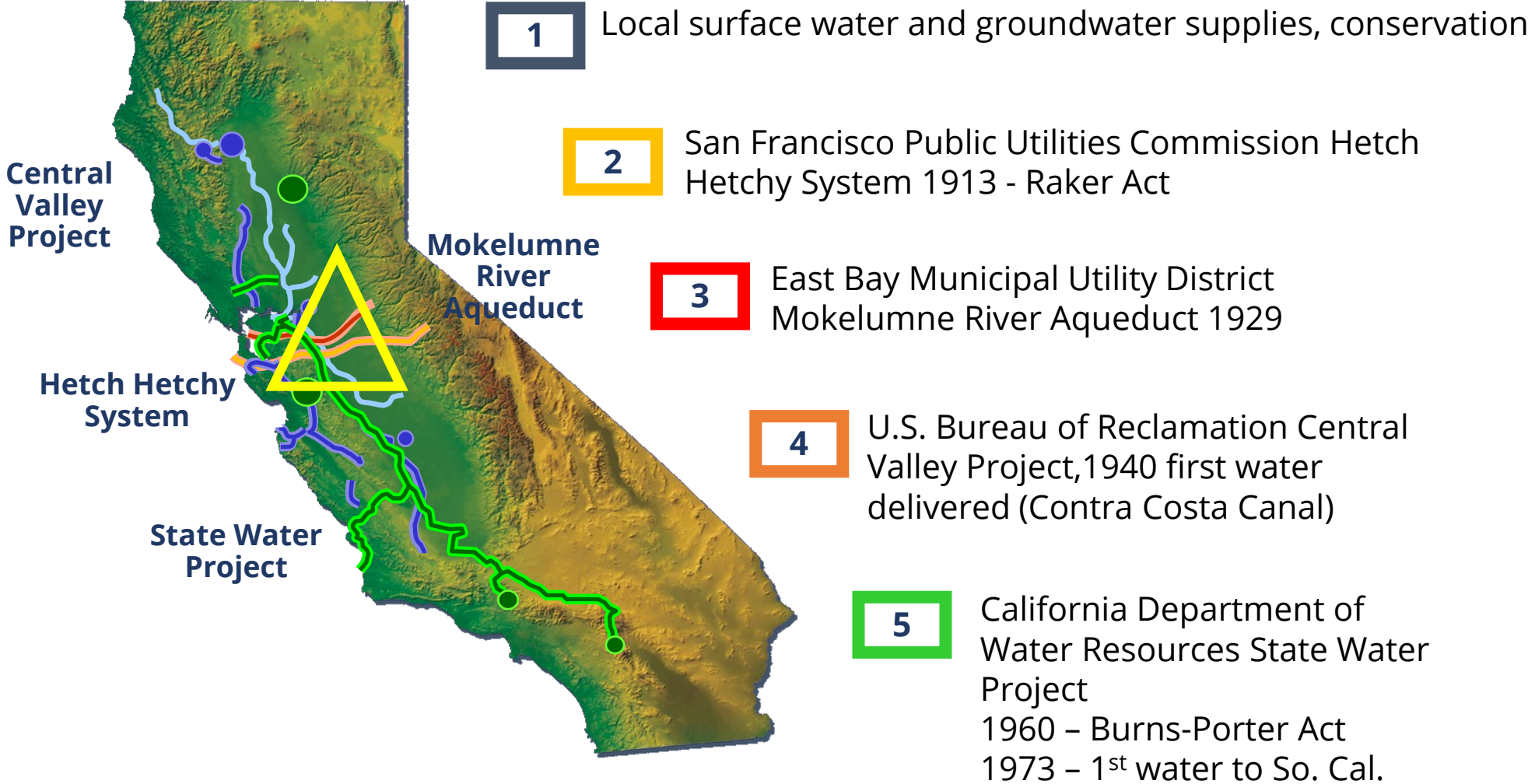


How has the Delta changed over time?



Change in Delta land cover, early 1800s to early 2000s. (Graphic by SFEI-ASC)

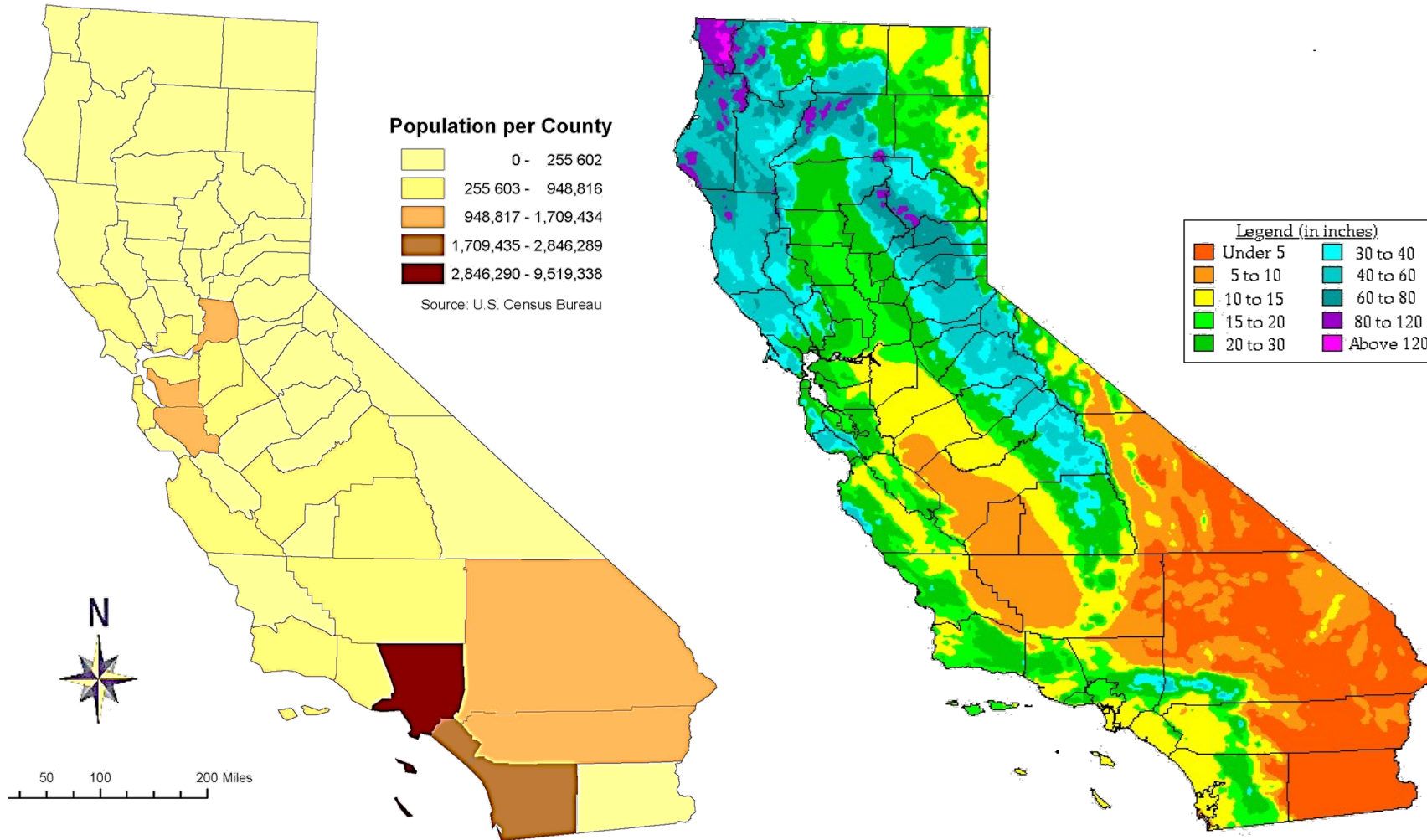
How has the Delta changed over time?



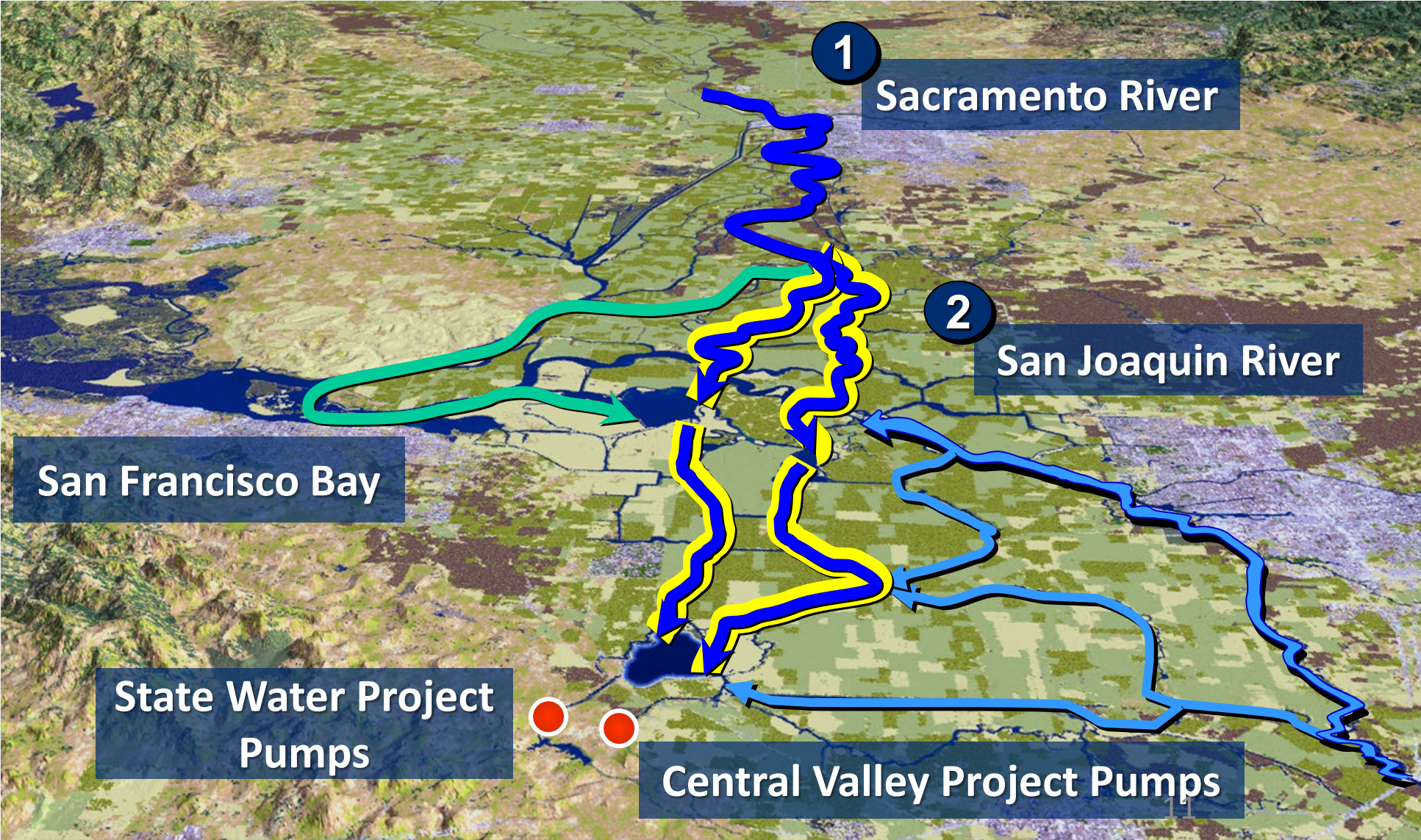
Evolution of California's water storage and delivery systems

**Why is the Delta
so important?**

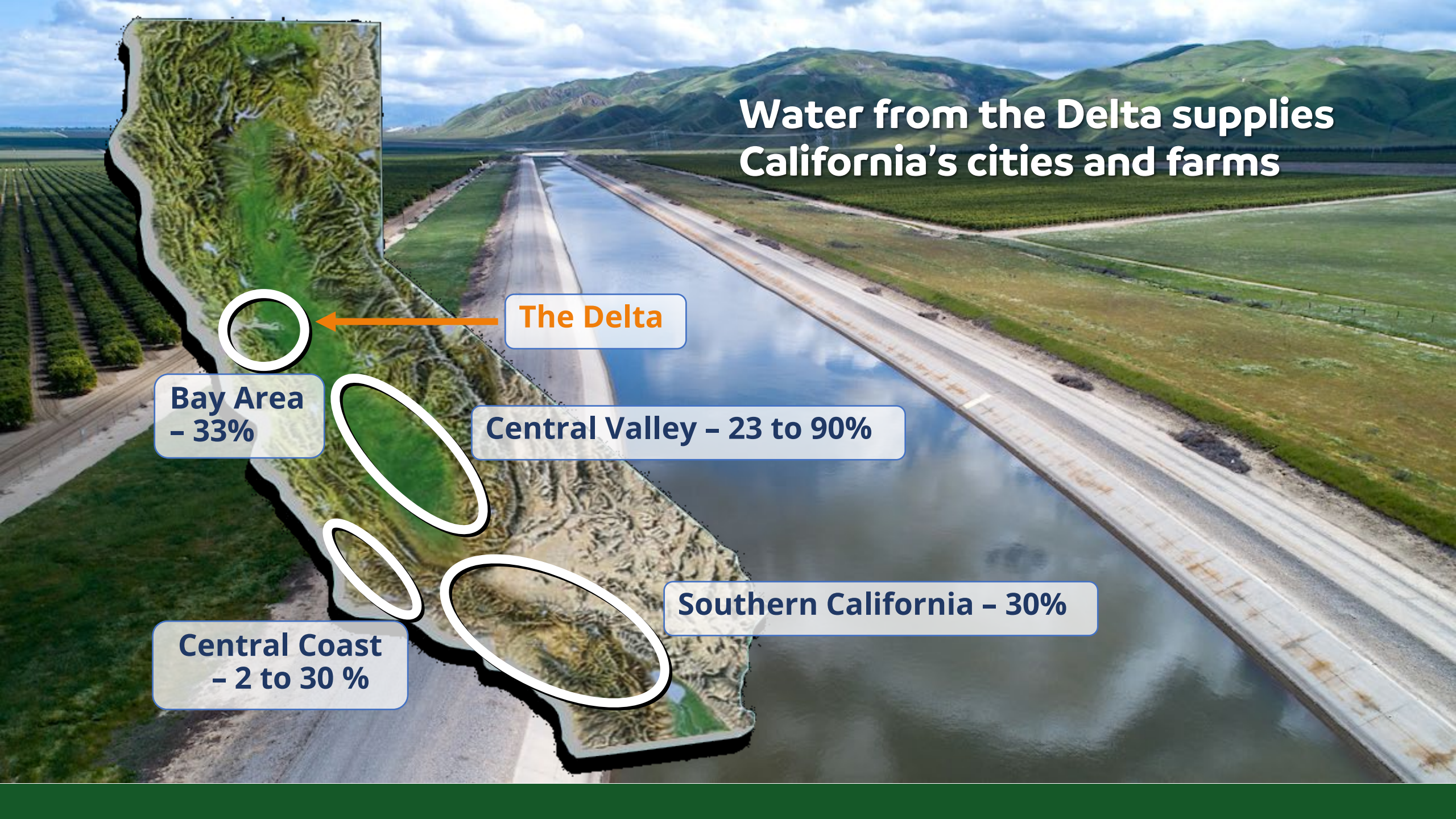
Why is the Delta so important?



How is water moved across the Delta?



Water from the Delta supplies California's cities and farms



The Delta

**Bay Area
- 33%**

Central Valley - 23 to 90%

Southern California - 30%

**Central Coast
- 2 to 30 %**

**What challenges
face the Delta?**

What challenges face the Delta?

Threats to the estuary include the following:



Delta Adapts

Creating a climate-resilient future

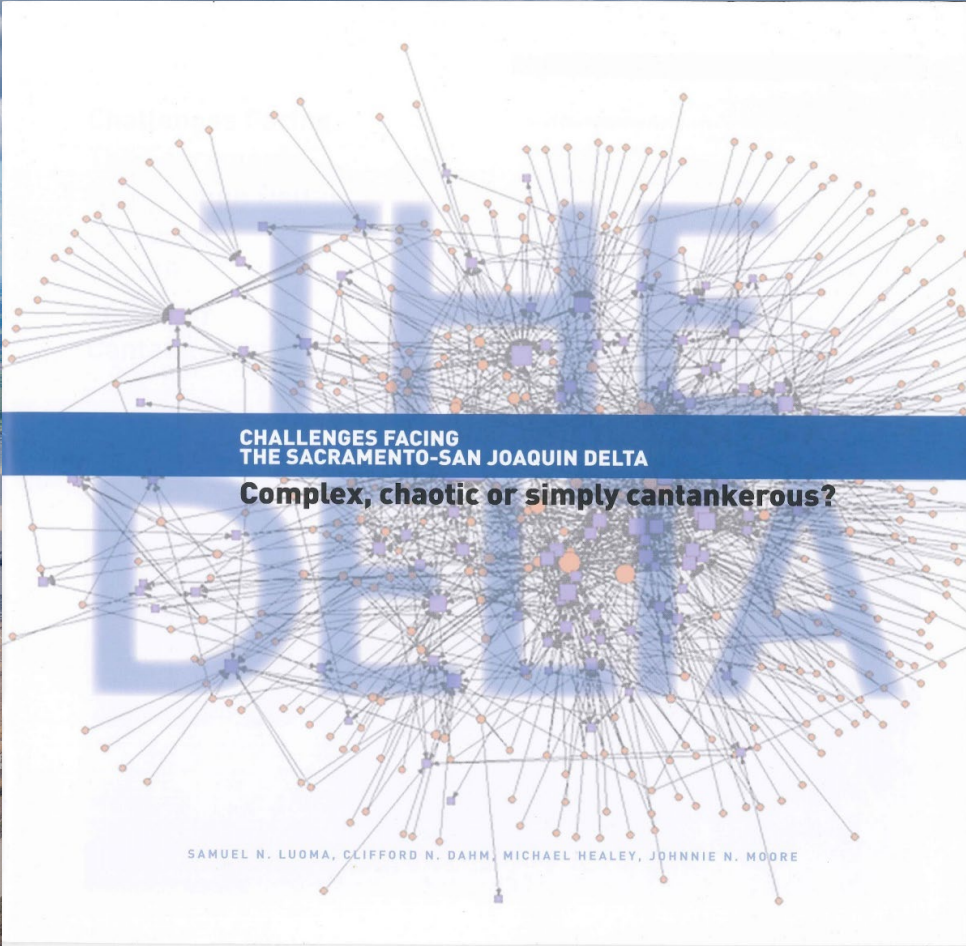
- Phase 1: Vulnerability Assessment

What specific risks does the Delta face?

- Phase 2: Adaptation Plan

How will we as a state face these risks?



A network diagram graphic consisting of numerous nodes (circles and squares) connected by thin lines, forming a dense, interconnected web. The nodes are colored in shades of orange, purple, and blue. The graphic is centered on a white background with a faint blue grid pattern.

**CHALLENGES FACING
THE SACRAMENTO-SAN JOAQUIN DELTA**

Complex, chaotic or simply cantankerous?

SAMUEL N. LUOMA, CLIFFORD N. DAHM, MICHAEL HEALEY, JOHNNIE N. MOORE

**How are we moving
forward?**

A trip down memory lane

Governance gridlock



Delta Reform Act of **2009**



The coequal goals

The **Delta Reform Act** created the **Council** and charged it with providing direction for the long-term future and management of the Delta and achieving the **coequal goals**:

- A reliable water supply
- A healthy ecosystem



Who are our Council members?

- The Council is comprised of **seven members**
- Of the seven, four are appointed by the **Governor**, one each by the **Senate** and **Assembly**, and the seventh is the chair of the **Delta Protection Commission**



Virginia Madueño
(Council chair)

GOVERNOR APPOINTEE



County Supervisor
Diane Burgis

DPC CHAIR



Former Senator
Ben Hueso

SENATE APPOINTEE



Maria Mehranian

ASSEMBLY APPOINTEE



Retired Judge
Frank Damrell Jr.

GOVERNOR APPOINTEE



Julie Lee

GOVERNOR APPOINTEE



Daniel Zingale

GOVERNOR APPOINTEE

The Council is...

- The organization ensuring **200+** agencies are working towards the coequal goals
- **A facilitator** of federal, state, and local collaboration
- **An honest broker of science** and a trusted source for independent peer review
- Advised by an independent 10-member **science board**
- Supported by a **dedicated staff** with extensive backgrounds in sciences, land use planning, engineering, communications, and more



What is the Delta Plan?

Recommendations, regulations, and performance measures for:

- Water conservation and efficiency
- Flood risk reduction
- Ecosystem restoration
- Water supply reliability and water storage
- Protection of the Delta as a unique place
- Ensuring best available science and adaptive management

Implementation of the Delta Plan is an interagency effort led by the Delta Stewardship Council



Delta Plan “covered actions”

- ① The Legislature granted the Council **regulatory and appellate authority** over covered actions
- ② **Regulatory policies** must meet the objectives the Legislature said were inherent in the coequal goals
- ③ **State and local agencies must demonstrate consistency with Delta Plan policies** when carrying out, approving, or funding covered actions prior to implementation

Delta Plan regulations

Each covered action must certify consistency with 17 Delta Plan policies

Delta Plan Policies

G P1(b)(1) – Coequal Goals

G P1(b)(2) – Mitigation Measures

G P1(b)(3) – Best Available Science

G P1(b)(4) – Adaptive Management

WR P1 - Reduce Reliance

WR P2 - Transparency in Water Contracting

ER P1 - Delta Flow Objectives

ER P2 - Restore Habitats at Appropriate Elevations

ER P3 – Protect Opportunities to Restore Habitat

ER P4 – Expand Floodplains and Riparian Habitat in Levee Projects

ER P5 - Avoid Invasive Nonnative Species

DP P1 – Locate New Urban Development Wisely

DP P2 - Respect Local Land Use

RR P1 - Prioritization of Levee Investments

RR P2 – Require Flood Protection in Residential and Rural Areas

RR P3 – Protect Floodplain

RR P4 – Floodplain Protection

Certifications & appeals

Certification of Consistency

- State or local public agency determines if a project is a covered action
- Covered actions require written certification with detailed findings as to whether the covered action is consistent with the Delta Plan

Appeals

- Any person who claims a covered action is inconsistent with the Delta Plan may file an appeal within 30 days
- Appeal must include specific factual allegations

Certifications and Appeals Noticed and Listed on Council website, coveredactions.deltacouncil.ca.gov

Council meetings

Our monthly Council meetings are the definitive place for the public to **learn about what's happening in the Delta**

Meetings are hosted in a **hybrid format**

- **In-person**
Held in Sacramento or the Delta
- **Via webcast**
Cal-Span.org

Recordings are archived on Cal-Span.org



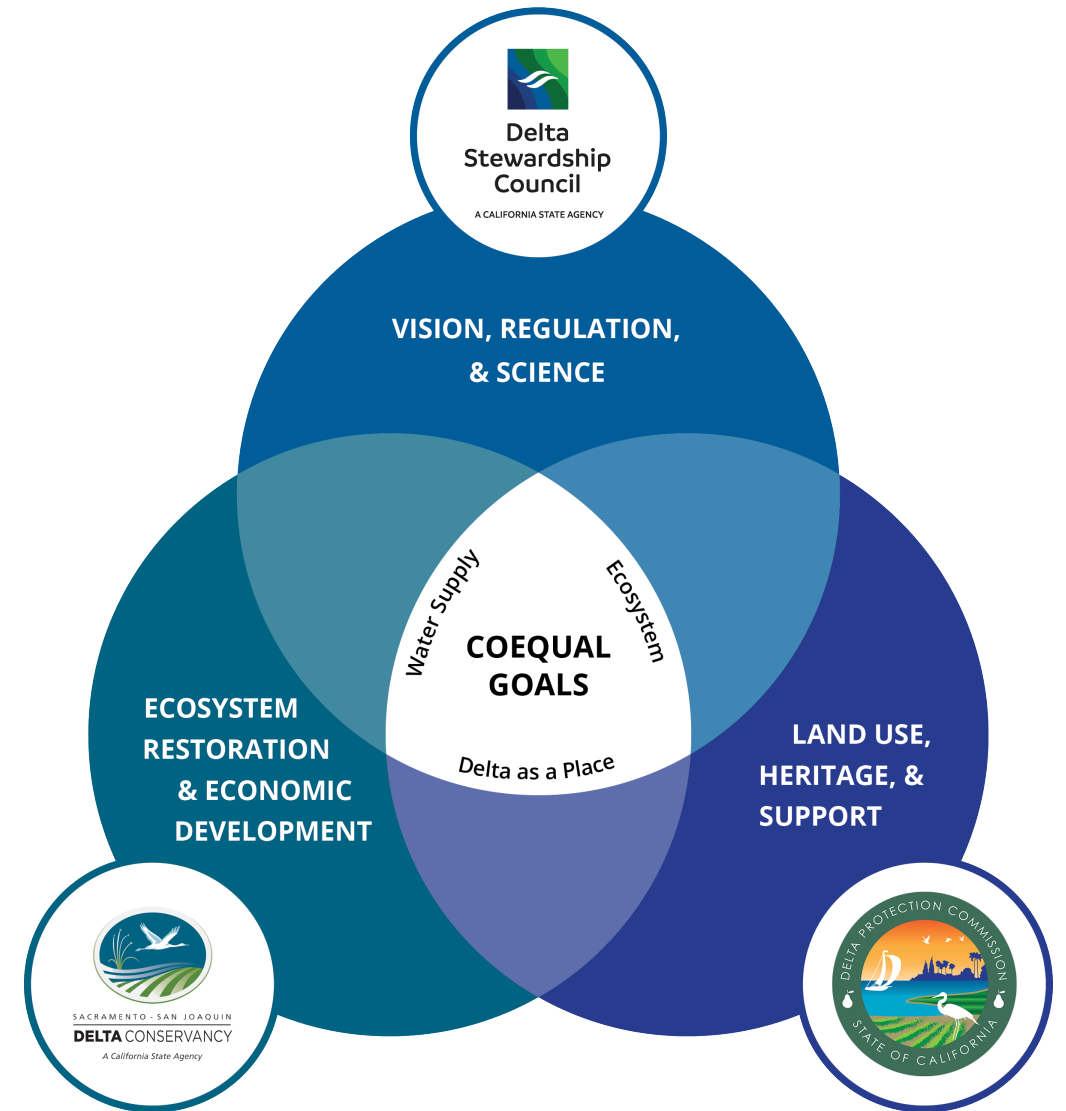
What we're working on

- Strategizing for **climate adaptation**
- **Reducing levee risk** through strategic investments
- Drafting an **environmental justice** paper
- Fostering meaningful **Tribal engagement**
- **Funding science**
- Coordinating scientific **peer reviews**
- **Plus more!**



The Delta's State Agencies

- **Three** state agencies regulate, conserve, and protect the Delta
- But the **Council**, **Conservancy**, and **Commission** are just three of the many organizations at work in California's Delta
- Progress toward the coequal goals requires **partnership** and **collaboration** between the Delta's three state agencies as well as with the other state, federal, and local agencies



Who we work with



**Delta
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A CALIFORNIA STATE AGENCY



SACRAMENTO - SAN JOAQUIN
DELTA CONSERVANCY



CALIFORNIA
**NATURAL
RESOURCES
AGENCY**



CalEPA
California Environmental
Protection Agency



200+ other State, federal, and local agencies

Today's takeaways

- **California relies on the Delta**
- **There is an urgent need for collaborative action and shared vision**
- **Looking ahead**
 - Much remains to be done
 - Any proposal will require funding, tradeoffs, and trust
- **We need a comprehensive approach**
 - Accelerate large-scale ecosystem restoration
 - 'Portfolio' approach to water management
 - Reduce reliance on the Delta
 - Augment investments in flood risk reduction
 - Use science to increase the likelihood of success



Thank you

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