

DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AGRICULTURAL LAND STEWARDSHIP STRATEGIES
DISCUSSION PAPER

BDCP and DELTA AGRICULTURE

May 2013



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DRAFT Executive Summary

AGRICULTURAL LAND STEWARDSHIP STRATEGIES

DISCUSSION PAPER¹

BDCP AND DELTA AGRICULTURE

Even with implementation of the mitigation measures and commitments proposed in the Spring 2013 Consultant Administrative Draft Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) and Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS), there will still be impacts to Delta agriculture. This paper sets forth a menu of agricultural land stewardship strategies that can be considered by decision makers when discussing appropriate mitigation measures or enhancements that support the Delta as a place. The approach outlined in this document does not try to distinguish environmental from economic impacts.

The strategies listed in [Table ES-1](#) and discussed in Chapter 1 were developed in consultation with Delta interests. At this time, there is no agreement that any strategy be pursued as a result of this paper. Instead, a primary purpose of the paper is to receive additional feedback from Delta interests with regard to whether these are strategies they would like to see implemented, whether they are adequately described and whether there are additional strategies that should be included. It is expected that implementation of the strategies would be voluntary on the part of the landowner, farmer and local government; that it would not conflict with the implementation of ongoing ecosystem restoration or BDCP conservation measures; and that it would be consistent with state wide and regional policies.

This paper assumes that, with the exception of current estimates for BDCP project and mitigation costs, additional funding will be necessary to implement any one of the strategies. Such funding could be part of a bond program, cap and trade revenues, greenhouse gas emission reduction programs or other sources still to be determined.

¹ This is a draft paper prepared to encourage discussion regarding the issues raised in the paper. This paper and related documents can be found at <https://bdcpdfl.water.ca.gov>. The website also provides an opportunity to provide feedback on the different strategies. Requests to meet to discuss issues raised by the paper should be sent to kspanos@water.ca.gov

There are a number of institutional structures that could be used or built upon to distribute funds that might be developed.

Implementation of a strategy could be carried out with regard to one or more of three different kinds of activities. Chapter 2 provides more discussion on implementation and funding.

- BDCP planning to include agricultural considerations
- An Optional Agricultural Land Stewardship Approach for a CEQA/NEPA mitigation package for BDCP
- Enhancements for the Delta as a place, consistent with the Delta Plan.

Strategies are organized in four categories:

- Strategies to help maintain farming in the Delta
- Strategies that provide incentives for conservation on farmland
- Strategies to manage land for purposes other than conventional crop production
- Strategies that provide for economic development and other benefits

The discussion of each strategy covers its topics in the following order:

- Description of the strategy
- Related policies and program
- Issues
- BDCP and EIR/EIS
- Opportunities and potential partners

The Appendix to this paper is a source document for information in the BDCP and the EIR/EIS relating to effects on agriculture in the Delta. Section I of the Appendix describes the process that led to the development of this paper. Section II describes the impacts of BDCP on agriculture in the Delta and provides an overview for the Sections that follow. Section III describes the mitigation measures and commitments that are in the current administrative drafts of the BDCP and EIR/EIS that relate to these impacts. See Table 2-1 for a summary of these measures. Section IV describes in some detail the primary mitigation measure for agriculture – an Agricultural Lands Stewardship Plan.

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Table ES-1 Potential Strategies

Note to reviewers: These strategies are still in the process of development. Feel free to make suggestions for additions or deletions.

Group A: Strategies to help maintain farming in the Delta

Strategy 1: [Improve flood protection](#)

Strategy 2: Maintain or improve water supply (under development)

Strategy 3: Improve water quality (under development)

Strategy 4: Prevent or reduce high groundwater levels (under development)

Strategy 5: Remove sediment (under development)

Strategy 6: Control terrestrial invasive species

6a: [Reinvigorate Delta County Weed Management Areas](#)

6b: [Prioritize invasive weed targets for Delta-wide eradication](#)

6c: [Encourage Use of Weed-Free Construction Materials](#)

Strategy 7: [Reduce conflict between agriculture and nearby habitat lands by creating a "good neighbor" policy](#)

Strategy 8: [Work with other interests to explore the value of reinstating state funding of Williamson Act subventions](#)

Strategy 9: [Work with counties to expand Williamson Act authorized uses to include open space/habitat lands in Williamson Act](#)

Strategy 10: Investigate options for *in lieu* tax revenue for counties (under development)

Strategy 11: [Provide for Agricultural Conservation Easements](#)

Group B: Strategies that provide incentives for conservation on farmland

Strategy 12: Partner with others to maintain and enhance environmental quality on farmland

Strategy 13: Compensate farmers to manage agricultural land

Strategy 14: Provide incentives for farmers to take part in a market based conservation program

Group C: Strategies to manage land for purposes other than conventional crop production

Strategy 15: Provide technical and financial assistance to stabilize or reverse land subsidence on Delta islands

Strategy 16: Assist landowners to produce and sell greenhouse gas offset credits in the AB 32 Cap-and-Trade program

Strategy 17: Compensate farmers to manage habitat lands

Group D: Strategies that provide for economic development and other benefits

Note to reviewers: This Group is still in the process of development. Feel free to make suggestions for additions or deletions.

Strategy 18: Establish a Delta Economic Development Corporation

Strategy 19: Make the regulatory system work better for farmers

Strategy 20: Consider possibility of Delta regional (or sub-region) permits.

Strategy 21: Provide technical and financial assistance for farmers to manage land to incorporate recreation and tourism

Strategy 22: Consider effects on agricultural infrastructure and/or concentric economic impacts, including transportation

Strategy 23: Designate for-profit habitat protection as agricultural production for specifically defined purposes

Strategy 24: Adaptive management for agricultural stewardship plans

Strategy 25: Look at ways to provide multiple benefits from mitigation actions as a way to increase overall benefits not just as a way to reduce costs.

Strategy 26: Consider opportunities to coordinate with others in helping to maintain a sustainable agricultural social and economic community in the Delta Region consistent with ecosystem conservation and restoration activities

ES-4