

# The Delta

## Fast Facts

- 30 million+ = number of Californians who depend on the Bay-Delta watershed for all or part of their drinking water, including seven of nine Bay Area counties.
- 40% = Percentage of Santa Clara County's water supply conveyed through the Delta.
- 66% = Probability of major earthquake, Delta levee failure and water supply disruption in the next 50 years.
- 20 feet = Depth below sea level of central Delta "islands."
- 9% = Percentage of 1,100 miles of Delta levees that meet today's flood control standards.
- 47% = Percentage of California's water runoff that flows through the Delta watershed.
- 15% = Percentage of natural flows into the Delta watershed that is exported by CVP and SWP.
- 158 = Number of Delta flood events since 1900.
- \$50 million+ = Cost to repair 2004 Jones Tract levee breach that occurred on a calm, summer day.



Images from the Delta

The Delta is where California's two longest rivers, the Sacramento and San Joaquin, meet and flow into San Francisco Bay to create the West Coast's largest estuary. The Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers receive snowmelt and rain runoff from more than 40 percent of California's land area, including the Sierra Nevada range in northern and eastern California.

A tremendously important ecosystem, the Delta supports more than 700 plant and animal species and is a major transit point along the Pacific Flyway, a key breeding area for numerous waterfowl and a migration route for salmon, steelhead and sturgeon. It is also a renowned recreational playground, a productive farming region and home to more than a half million people. Its more than 1,000 miles of levees protect vital Bay Area and state infrastructures, including gas and power lines, pipelines, highways and railroads.

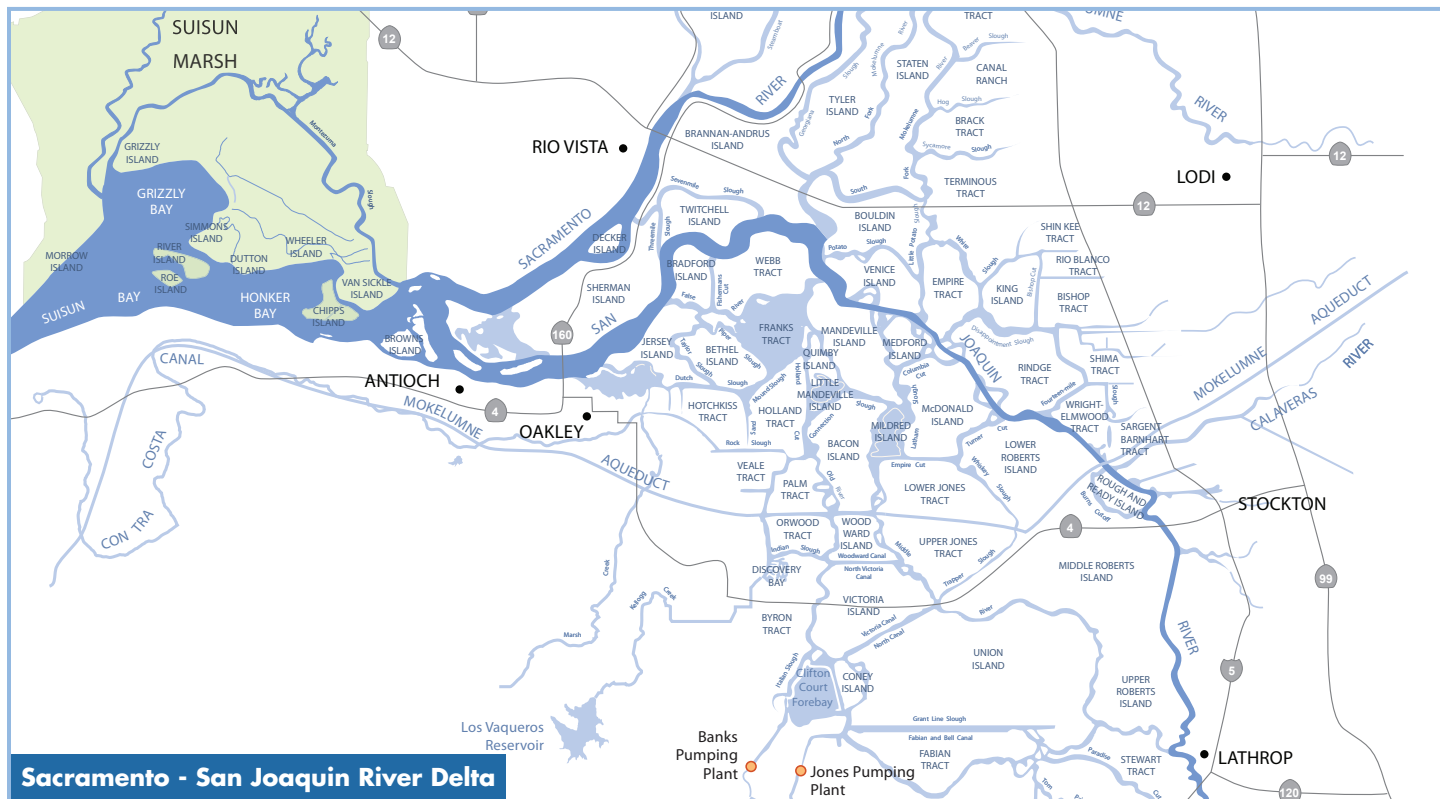
The Delta is the hub of California's major water systems, the State Water Project (SWP) and the federal Central Valley Project (CVP) supply drinking water to two thirds of the state's population and irrigate millions of acres of the nation's most productive agricultural lands. Santa Clara County relies on these two water projects for 40 percent of its water supplies on average. Consequently, threats to the Delta ecosystem and these water projects pose problems not only to Southern California or farmers, but to Silicon Valley too.

Invasive and non-native species, water pollution and wastewater discharges, unscreened water diversions, and changes in natural

continued on back...

Where does our water come from? **The Delta**

# The Delta



flow patterns and hydrology threaten the health of the Delta's ecosystem and have contributed to the decline of several fish populations. And regulatory constraints to protect these threatened fish species have reduced the reliability of the county's SWP and CVP water supplies.

Catastrophic levee failure is also a growing threat. The Public Policy Institute of California, a nonpartisan think-tank, estimates there is a 66 percent chance of major levee failure in the Delta within the next 50 years. A major levee failure could shut down the SWP and CVP Delta pumps for six to 18 months, depending on when and where it occurred, severely impacting Santa Clara County and the California economy.

Climate change scenarios predict even greater threats in the future. Earlier snow melts will put additional strain on the Delta levees. Rising sea level also threatens levee stability and will allow more salty, ocean water to intrude into the Delta. This increased salinity may affect fish populations and will increase the cost to treat the water for use in Santa Clara County and elsewhere.

To address these risks, the water district is actively working with others on the Bay Delta Conservation Plan

(BDCP), a promising effort aimed at the dual goals of improving Delta ecosystem health and water supply reliability. BDCP participants include the Department of Water Resources, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, state and federal fishery agencies, SWP and CVP contractors, and environmental organizations. The conservation strategy will include measures to restore habitat, reduce stressors such as invasive species and contaminants and improve water conveyance through the Delta. The BDCP will also secure long-term Endangered Species Act permits for SWP and CVP operations.

The fisheries conservation community generally agrees that a properly operated, new isolated conveyance facility will substantially benefit certain listed species compared to the existing system. An isolated conveyance facility would divert water through five new intakes along the Sacramento River before it enters the Delta and convey it directly to the SWP and CVP pumping plants in the south Delta. At the same time, a new isolated facility equipped with state-of-the-art fish screens would help achieve a more reliable water supply for Santa Clara County.