

Alternative 4
Habitat Restoration

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Emphasis

Reduce the conflict between fisheries and diversions by increasing fish populations through habitat restoration and mortality reductions. Emphasize protection of threatened and endangered species.

Distinguishing Features

Physical and Structural Features

A moderate number of physical environmental improvements in and above the Delta, including restoration of various types of habitat, new screens, and a salmon bypass at Old River.

Operational and Management Features

Modify Clifton Court Forebay operations to reduce entrainment. Real time management.

Institutional and Policy Features

Subsidence management program on the Delta Islands. A variety of other programmatic elements, including hatchery operations, management of water quality, and land use programs. No major institutional elements identified. However, real time management component has institutional implications.

Benefits

- Improves physical habitat
- Reduces fish mortality caused by operations
- Reduces pollutant mass loading and improves timing of discharges
- Reduces long-term island subsidence
- Reduces export vulnerability to fish take restrictions

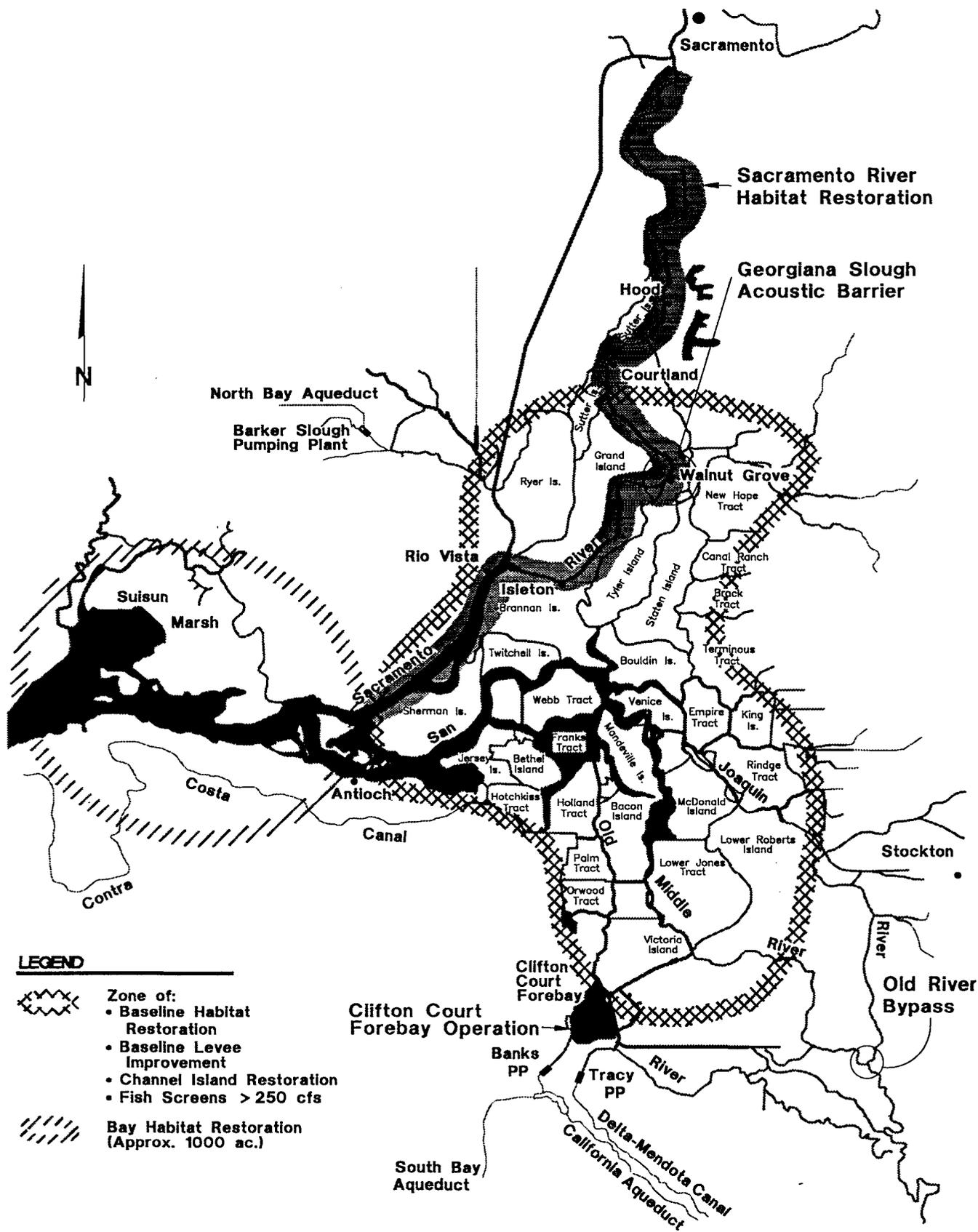
Constraints and Concerns

- Mortality in south Delta export facilities remains significant
- Export water quality remains problematic
- Export supplies remain highly constrained
- Transfer opportunities highly constrained
- Export supplies remain vulnerable to interruption
- Delta islands remain vulnerable to flooding
- Uncertainty that ecosystem restoration will result in reduced constraints on diversions
- Mortality in south Delta export facilities not eliminated
- Possible reductions in south Delta water quality
- Possible new entrainment of salmon smolts into the Sacramento diversion intake

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PRELIMINARY DRAFT



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Habitat Restoration

This alternative emphasizes a base level of habitat restoration to improve ecosystem health and increase populations of special status species. Healthy populations of these species, including Delta smelt and winter-run chinook salmon, will be better able to withstand the impacts of Delta water export operations. Restoration of leveed lands to tidal shallow water habitat would provide new habitat for native fish species. Levee improvements will be made in ways that reduce system vulnerability while restoring nearshore aquatic habitat, as well as riparian vegetation. Long-term programs to manage subsidence will also reduce vulnerability. Source control of pollutants will increase water quality for all beneficial uses.

Habitat improvements will be made throughout the watershed to improve ecosystem quality and aid the recovery of species of special concern. In-Delta levee water side and land side modifications to provide shallow water habitat and riparian habitat will be made at many sites. Dredge material will be used to recreate new shallow water habitat out of deeper Delta island habitat. A long-term program to manage subsidence will be implemented. Habitat improvements will also be made to diked wetlands and tidal wetlands between Collinsville and Carquinez Strait. Water supply reliability and Delta species will both benefit from habitat improvements and levee protection. Operation of Clifton Court Forebay will be modified to reduce intake of fish. Delta water quality will be improved through agricultural, industrial, and municipal wastewater reclamation and reuse, timing and dilution of releases of poor quality agricultural drainage, and better source control.

Physical and Structural Features

and maintain adequate flows

Delta Levee Habitat Restoration— Restore approximately 100 levee miles of shallow water, riverine and riparian habitat in the Delta to provide forage and cover habitat for resident and anadromous fish, and to provide other benefits associated with riparian habitat. Actions might include setback levees, creation of berms, creation of shallow water habitat, and increased vegetation on levees. Considerations for site selection will include distance from hazards such as pumping plants, protection from waves generated by wind and boat wakes, importance of island integrity to the maintenance of Delta water quality, and need to improve channel capacity and structural stability of levees. Good candidate areas are Twitchell Island along Threemile Slough and Sevenmile Slough, Georgiana Slough, and the north and south forks of the Mokelumne River.

*and maintain
sloughs*

Delta Habitat Restoration— Restore shallow water and tidal wetland habitat in the Delta to provide spawning areas, forage areas, and escape cover for juvenile salmon, Delta smelt, splittail, and other species. Candidate areas include Prospect Island, Liberty Island, Little Holland Tract, Decker Island, Hastings Tract, Yolo Bypass, and the southeast Delta. Also restore shallow water shoreline habitat along margins of the lower Sacramento and San Joaquin channels, and tributary sloughs including Barker Slough, Lindsey Slough, and Parker Island. Riparian, wetland, and terrestrial habitat would also be restored on Delta islands and upland areas adjacent to river channels.

Bay Habitat Restoration— Restore about 1,000 acres of tidal wetlands between Collinsville and Carquinez Strait. Actions may include conversion of diked wetlands to tidal wetlands or use of dredge spoils to create wetland areas. The resulting habitat types will provide wet year spawning habitat for Delta smelt, rearing areas for salmon, as well as habitat for diverse wildlife including canvasback and redhead ducks.

Install Bypass at Mouth of Old River— Construct a bypass at the mouth of Old River that will encourage outmigrants to stay in San Joaquin River while allowing a managed flow down Old River.

Fish Screens— Install fish screens on diversions over 250 cfs that are on fish migration routes in the Delta, rivers, and tributaries.

Flood Protection Level— This action provides a minimum level of protection to Delta system levees. First, all levees not yet providing a level of protection equivalent to the hazard mitigation plan (HMP) will receive the necessary upgrades to their levees to meet HMP standards. A level of flood protection equivalent to the US Army Corps of Engineers' Public Law (PL)- 99 standard would be provided to: (1) critical western Delta islands (such as Sherman and Jersey islands), with important regional infrastructure (e.g. the Mokelumne Aqueduct, transmission lines, Highway 160, etc.); and (2) islands with both valuable habitat and infrastructure (such as New Hope Tract, Bouldin Island, Sherman Island, Palm Tract, Lower and Upper Jones Tracts, and Lower Roberts Islands).

Channel Improvements and Levee Maintenance— A minimal level of channel improvements (e.g. widening for improved conveyance), levee maintenance and stabilization (e.g. stabilizing berms), the modification of agricultural practices to reduce subsidence potential, setback levees, providing funding for maintenance and stabilization, and maintaining and/or reconstructing levees are indicative of the range of actions that would be implemented with the intent of reducing the risk of the Delta levee system with

respect to its value in providing water supply, water quality, ecosystem quality, and land use/infrastructure benefits.

Operational and Management Features

Real Time Monitoring— Establish an adequate real-time monitoring to determine location of species of special concern so that project operations can be effectively managed to reduce losses of fish and minimize effects on habitat.

Acoustic Barrier at Mouth of Georgiana Slough— Operate an acoustic barrier at the mouth of Georgiana Slough. Work to improve the effectiveness of behavioral barriers. Evaluate use of acoustic barriers at the Delta Cross Channel and Threemile Slough.

Modify Clifton Court Forebay Operation— Modify operations of Clifton Court Forebay so that it does not entrain as many fish into the forebay during typical “Big Gulp” operation. Install regulating gates into Italian Slough so that water can be drawn in over time at a lower velocity. This will reduce the number of fish lost to predation in the forebay.

Mark Hatchery Fish— Mark salmon produced in hatcheries to facilitate selective catch by commercial and recreation fisheries.

Pen Rearing of Striped Bass— Rear striped bass in pens to maintain recreational fishery and avoid operational constraints on water projects due to spawning bass.

Mine Drainage Remediation— Remediate discharges from abandoned mines in tributaries of the upper Sacramento River downstream of Shasta Dam to the maximum extent reasonably possible.

Management of Water Quality— Implement actions such as source control regulations for agricultural drainage, retiring lands with drainage problems, and other cost-effective management of urban, agricultural, and industrial discharges and runoff to improve Delta water quality.

*Sharon
Comments*

*Internal Working Draft
for Discussion Purposes Only*

Institutional and Policy Features

Water Quality Standards— Maintain current standards for Delta water quality and position of X2.

Other Programs— Implement recommended habitat restoration actions from other programs, including CVPIA and the Anadromous Fish Restoration Plan. Examples of specific actions include small dam removal on Clear Creek, dam removal on Battle Creek, establishment of a population of winter run chinook salmon on Battle Creek.

*More
w/ other
habitat*

Sacramento River Habitat Restoration— Restore riparian, shaded riverine, and shallow water habitat along the Sacramento River from Sacramento to Collinsville. First step will be to provide matching funds for Corps of Engineers feasibility study. Subsequent restoration would be funded 75 percent by COE.

Preserve Agricultural Land Uses— Establish programs to preserve agricultural land uses that help to protect the ecosystem. Examples include limiting levee restoration to levels that are inadequate to permit residential construction on Delta islands, and incentive programs to preserve habitats such as pasture, which is important for sandhill cranes.

Implement a Subsidence Management Program— Develop and implement a very long-term subsidence management program that prescribes land use strategies related to the degree of subsidence. For some deep Delta islands (below -10 feet in elevation) eliminate traditional agriculture in favor of seasonal wetland management to stop and reverse subsidence. At elevations from -10 to -3 feet, stabilize subsidence by rotating seasonal wetland with wildlife-friendly agricultural use. At elevations from -3 to +3 feet, maintain agricultural uses on some parcels, identify other areas for restoration to tidal wetlands.

Coordination

Coordinate permitting process to

CALFED Regulatory Team— ~~Determine how to implement a regulatory team to facilitate getting permits~~ ^{for} environmental restoration projects. Each member agency would have a key person on team.

Response Program for Introduced Species Control— Establish and fund a rapid response program among environmental agencies to provide a fast and effective means of managing introduced species introduced to the Bay-Delta. Carry out continuing management programs for nuisance species such as water hyacinth.

Dredge Materials— Establish a policy that all future clean dredge material out of the Delta above Chipps Island should go into Delta restoration projects.

Safe Harbor for Maintenance— Encourage farmers and levee maintenance districts to leave habitat areas undisturbed when feasible by providing protection from ESA provisions.

Emergency Levee Management Plan— An emergency levee management plan would provide necessary funding and direction to reclaim Delta islands in the event of inundation to continue protection of Delta functions as an integrated resource system. Funding would be provided to ensure that a suitable amount of equipment and materials would be readily available to rapidly respond to flood fights.

Preliminary Assessment

Benefits

Ecosystem Quality— This alternative will enhance ecosystem quality through restoration and enhancement of riverine, riparian, wetland, and adjacent terrestrial habitat. Expansion of floodway habitat and channels in the Bay-Delta will help to restore fish spawning, rearing, and feeding habitats and improve fish survival. Improvements to Clifton Court Forebay will also help in reducing the numbers of fish diverted into the forebay and increasing survival of fish that are drawn into the forebay.

Water Supply— This alternative provides limited improvement to the reliability of water supply by increasing fish populations (through habitat improvements and reduced diversion effects), reducing the likelihood of regulatory intervention in export operations.

Water Quality— This alternative relies on core actions including point and non-point source controls and mine drainage remediation to improve water quality.

System Reliability— Creation of shallow water habitat simultaneously with levee reconstruction provides better levees and protection for adjacent land uses. Improvement of the levees around the critical western islands protects those islands as well as protecting in-Delta and agricultural export water supplies from salinity intrusion due to island failure.

Constraints and Concerns

Fisheries— Though improvements to habitat and fish survival will benefit ecosystem quality, complete restoration of important fish populations may not be possible without reducing the use of the Delta as a water supply conduit and greatly reducing exports from the south Delta. Mortality in South Delta export facilities remains significant.

Exports— Export supplies remain highly constrained and vulnerable to interruption while export water quality remains problematic.

Transfers— Water transfer opportunities remain highly constrained because the Delta configuration is unchanged.

Solution Principles— Ecosystem and vulnerability improvements without commensurate water supply benefits may violate principles.