

California Department of Water Resources

News for Immediate Release

November 7, 2003

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**DWR ANNOUNCES LAND PURCHASE
FOR DUTCH SLOUGH TIDAL MARSH PROJECT**

SACRAMENTO – State and local agencies this month completed the purchase of 1,166 acres in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, paving the way for the largest scale wetlands restoration effort in the region.

Acquisition of the land will be part of the Dutch Slough Tidal Marsh Restoration Project, a collaborative effort that will benefit a diversity of fish and wildlife, including at-risk species. It also will support future opportunities for public recreation and shoreline access, environmental education, scientific research, levee protection and flood control.

Located in the western Delta near Oakley, Dutch Slough is a critical transition zone between saltwater and freshwater habitats and is important to resident and migratory fish. When restored, the site will provide a strategic link in a 20 mile wildlife corridor that extends from the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers and Suisun Marsh, offering a diversity of wetlands and terrestrial habitats to support native wildlife.

California Bay-Delta Authority Director Patrick Wright commended the City of Oakley, private landowners, The Conservation Fund, and Natural Heritage Institute for their efforts to make the acquisition a reality.

“The Dutch Slough project stands out as the kind of collaborative, locally supported effort that can benefit the ecosystem as well as people,” Wright said.

“It’s a rare and significant opportunity for large-scale tidal marsh restoration in the Delta,” said Sam Schuchat, Coastal Conservancy executive officer. “This project will also provide the local community and Delta visitors with new opportunities for getting to and enjoying the Delta environment.”

The newly acquired land has long been the site of dairy and farming operations. Landowners previously planned to sell the property for intensive development of more than 4,000 residential units, but ultimately reached agreement with state, local, and non-profit agencies to make it available for the restoration project.

The project will also provide much-needed open space and recreational opportunities for rapidly growing eastern Contra Costa County, where few places on the Delta shore are accessible to the public. Proposed project elements, which will require future funding, include construction of fishing piers, wildlife viewing areas, and a trail network along Delta levees that will connect to East Bay Regional Park District's Ironhouse Trail.

Local support was critical to the acquisition and future planned activities will involve community participation. Nancy Kaiser, City of Oakley Parks and Recreation manager, affirmed: "The City of Oakley is excited about the opportunity to serve in cooperation as stewards of such a vital open space preservation project for the region."

Assemblymember Joe Canciamilla (D-Pittsburg) was deeply involved in the Dutch Slough negotiations from the time he served on the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors to ensure that the property was protected and restored. "I am extremely pleased that this agreement has been finalized by the acquisition of this very important parcel. This is a prime example of what can happen to protect habitat and open space when a willing owner and seller is able to work constructively and positively with the local community, state agencies and the public. I am honored to have been a part of the effort to see this to completion and believe that this agreement and purchase will be of lasting benefit to the local community and the state."

Purchased with grants from the California Bay-Delta Authority's Ecosystem Restoration Program, the State Coastal Conservancy, and Department of Water Resources, additional funds provided by the Authority and the Conservancy will support planning and design work for the project over the next several years. During the interim, the Department of Water Resources will manage the site and allow livestock grazing operations to continue under separate leasing agreements.

Over the next several years the project will be implemented and monitored to both restore the Delta environment and improve scientific understanding of issues associated with restoration activities in the Delta. Knowledge gained from carefully-designed restoration projects will contribute to filling data gaps and advance the understanding about wetlands ecology and the complex interactions of biological, physical, and chemical processes of this dynamic ecosystem. The topography of the site will allow the project to be implemented in phases over a period of years allowing scientists to monitor the results and modify the design as needed as each phase is constructed. John Cain, restoration ecologist for the Natural Heritage Institute, touted: "This project is an outstanding opportunity to learn more about the Delta's aquatic ecosystem as we attempt to restore it."

Restoration of the site will be implemented through a partnership that includes the California Bay-Delta Authority, the California Department of Water Resources, the State Coastal Conservancy, Natural Heritage Institute, and the City of Oakley.

The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.

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