



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF  
FOOD & AGRICULTURE

A. G. Kawamura, Secretary

May 8, 2008

Honorable Philip Isenberg, Chair  
Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
650 Capitol Mall, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Response to the Task Force's Questions to the California Department of Food and Agriculture

Dear Chairman Isenberg:

As part of its fact-finding for the preparation of the Task Force's Delta Vision Strategic Plan, you have posed a series of questions to a number of state agencies, including the Department of Food and Agriculture. You have asked this Department to respond to three questions. With this memorandum, the Department responds to the first two questions. Our response to your third question is in development and will be forthcoming shortly under separate cover.

The first two questions are:

1. *How could the Department use its resources and expertise to help continue the practice of productive agriculture in the Delta, recognizing the significant changes expected to occur over the next 50 years?*
2. *In terms of agricultural practices, how could the Department implement the Task Force recommendation to increase the visibility of the Delta as a unique and valued area?*

### Our Response Approach

We will respond to your questions in two ways: (1) With a proposal for how agricultural existing services and programs can be delivered to the Delta to benefit both agriculture and the Delta as a unique place; and, (2) by describing and categorizing the full array of programs and services currently being provided by not only this Department, but all of our local, state and federal partner agencies who serve agriculture and rural communities. In this cover letter, I will offer my thoughts on how these programs can be better delivered to the Delta to address your two questions. Attached to this memorandum is a



Honorable Philip Isenberg, Chair  
May 8, 2008  
Page 2

description of eight agencies (nine if you include the local Resource Conservation Districts covered under the state Department of Conservation) and their programs with links to their websites for more information. The programs selected were from among the number of programs offered by each agency; we attempted to select only those that were germane to the Vision's goals and the questions posed. Covering the compendium of program descriptions is a matrix/table of contents that portrays our assessment of how these programs address the Vision's goals. The matrix also indicates the page number on which each program description can be found.

The agency and program descriptions were compiled via interviews with program managers and staff, a review of agency and program literature, and, of course, the appropriate websites. Descriptions were vetted with each agency prior to including in the attachment.

#### Sustaining Delta Agriculture that Sustains the Delta as a Unique Place

**The Tools Exist.** It should be noted that in most cases the programs described are not Delta-specific, but apply countywide, regionally or statewide. Also, to use these programs to give increased attention to the Delta would, in most cases, require additional budget, executive direction and/or statutory authority. Nevertheless, an "independent body with authority" to provide cohesive governance in the Delta should be capable of capitalizing on these programs to better support and sustain a productive agriculture in the Delta into the future.

**Focus and Cohesion.** More benefit to the Delta could be derived from these programs and services as they are with at least: (1) A greater awareness of each other's activities; (2) Enhancing coordination of program planning and delivery; (3) better sharing of information of mutual benefit; and, (4) at the state level, state and local agencies working together to influence federal policies and budgets to bring additional resources to bear in the Delta (e.g., the Hudson River Valley, the Upper Mississippi River watershed, and Chesapeake Bay).

**Federal Farm Bill Opportunities.** In the latter case, Governor Schwarzenegger has directed the Department of Food and Agriculture to serve as the lead agency in collaboration with other key state agencies on a reauthorized Farm Bill that benefits California to the extent that our agricultural stature warrants. Towards that end, I have been working with the cabinet secretaries from Resources; Business, Housing and Transportation; Cal-EPA; and, Health and Human Services, for a national farm and food policy that better supports California with programs and dollars that will also benefit

Honorable Philip Isenberg, Chair  
May 8, 2008  
Page 3

agriculture and communities in the Delta, especially including the following Farm Bill titles: conservation, energy, specialty crop, rural development. This Department is available to work with the Delta governance structure you finally recommend to identify Delta needs in these areas so that we can continue to influence farm policy and annual budget allocations.

**Programs for Regional Approaches.** As you can see from the programs and services available through our Specialty Crop and other programs, as well as through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Farm Services Agency and Rural Development, there are a myriad of programs that can benefit Delta agricultural productivity, working (multi-functional) landscapes strategies, rural economic development to support Delta legacy towns, value-added agriculture, resource conservation and ecosystem health. In particular, FSA and NRCS offer conservation programs that are intended to be applied on a regional, multiple landowner scale, in partnership with state and regional entities. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and its adjuncts, the Conservation Innovation Grant program, and the proposed Regional Water Enhancement Program, and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program would all serve these purposes.

We need to work better together to capture California's fair share of federal farm program assistance. I look forward to working with the future Delta governance entity/entities to identify opportunities to capture, direct and apply this assistance to sustain Delta agriculture and build upon its unique environment and rural economy and culture.

**Pulling it all together.** Your Vision sets forth in general terms the nature of governance that you believe is needed to guide the use and management of the Delta and its resources. In Chapter V of the Vision, it is acknowledged that more than one entity will be needed to address all of the critical issues of the Delta. I agree. Some have suggested a Delta conservancy and even proposed legislation to create one. The Delta Protection Commission has communicated to the Task Force its capacity to serve such a role. In any event, I recommend that the agricultural experts on the front line of Delta agriculture be involved, including the County Agricultural Commissioners, UC Cooperative Extension, local resource conservation districts, agricultural land trusts, and USDA conservationists. These experts are supported at the state and federal level with a vast array of other experts. The entity must be a forum where these resources are pulled together under a single Delta vision, where information is shared and program delivery not only coordinated, but focused to address the top priorities.

Honorable Philip Isenberg, Chair  
May 8, 2008  
Page 4

The governance entity that deals with the nitty-gritty of on-the ground implementation of the Strategic Plan, for example, could be informed by, and provide guidance to, local Weed Management Areas, the statewide Invasive Species Council and the Vertebrate Pest Control Research Program, to better manage terrestrial and aquatic invasive species in the Delta.

As another example, with support from the Delta Protection Commission and the NRCS, a group of landowners and local leaders and state agencies, including this Department, are putting together a strategic plan and funding application package to USDA to support a Delta Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area and Council (described in the attachment). The Delta RC&D could be an important organizing tool available to the Delta governing entity for facilitating Vision-compatible economic development in legacy towns. The RC&D Council could engage local and state economic development agencies to tap, for example, the USDA Redevelopment grants and loans for farm labor housing, infrastructure improvement, renewable energy industries, and the development of new agricultural products. The RC&D could also tap our Department's marketing assistance, and the expertise of UC Cooperative Extension, and the local government expertise through the agricultural commissioners to develop direct marketing and agri-tourism opportunities.

On a final note, there are a number of state grant programs, most supported by limited dedicated funding from the agricultural industry, that contribute to the goals of the Delta Vision. There are also federal conservation and economic development grants that directly bear on many of the goals of the Vision, but require state and local matching funds. I recommend that as future bond measures and other new funding sources are formulated to implement the Delta Strategic Plan, these existing programs are considered for funding support. In addition, the collective staff resources of county Farm Advisors, Agricultural Commissioners and resource conservation districts, those who directly serve Delta growers is woefully inadequate (e.g., three Farm Advisors to serve the five Delta counties, of which the Delta is just a fraction). New funding for the Delta must support the agricultural and conservation technical assistance needed on the ground. Funding this Delta agricultural infrastructure will be critical to make the most these programs for the benefit of the Delta's ecosystem, water system, and the sense of the Delta as a place of unique public value.

In summary, as you can see from the attachment, there is a large number and a wide variety of agriculturally-related programs and services that exist within the Department of Food and Agriculture and its state, federal and local partners. The tools to better support Delta agriculture and the Delta as a unique rural place are there. The governance you are contemplating should

Honorable Philip Isenberg, Chair  
May 8, 2008  
Page 5

be the focal point for pulling them together and using them in a cohesive fashion to address the Delta's top priorities as set forth in your Vision. The Department of Food and Agriculture and the state Board of Food and Agriculture stand ready to do its share.

Please contact me if you have any questions or need further information.  
Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A.G. Kawamura', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

A.G. Kawamura  
Secretary

Enclosure

Table of Contents and Matrix of Agricultural Agency Programs and Services that Sustain Delta Agriculture and the Delta as a Unique Place

Agency/Program	Page	Co-equal Values	Sustaining Delta Agriculture	Promoting the Delta as a Place	Estuary and Invasive Species	Water Use Efficiency & Conservation	In-Delta Diversion & Water Qual.	Integration/Consistency w/DV Policy	Inappropriate Uses - Agland Protection	Emergency Response	Economic Development - Delta Towns	Working, Multifunctional Landscapes
CA PESTICIDE REG.	23											
•Alliance Grant Program	24		X		X		X	X				
•IPM Innovation Award	24		X		X		X	X				
•Pest Mgmt. Asssit.	24		X		X		X	X				
•Small Grant Proposal	24		X		X		X	X				
•Safety and Pesticides	24		X		X		X	X				
CA CONSERVATION	25											X
•Williamson Act	25		X	X				X	X			
•Farmland Conservancy	25		X	X				X	X			X
•Res. Conserv. Districts	26	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
•Farmland Mapping	26		X	X				X	X			X
•Watershed Program	27	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
USDA NATURAL RES. CONSERV. SERVICE	27											X
•EQIP Cost-share	28	X	X		X	X	X	X				X
•Wetland Reserve	28			X	X		±	X	X		X	X
•Floodplain Easements	29			X	X			X	X			
•Farm/Ranch Protect.	29		X	X				X	X			X
•Wildlife Incentives	29				X			X				X
•Conservation Security	29	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			X
•Conserv. & Econ. Dev.	30		X	X				X	X		X	
USDA FARM SERVICES AGENCY	30											
•Conserv. Reserve Prog.	30	X	X		X	X	X	±	X			X
-CRP Enhancement	31	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			X
-CRP Continuous	32	X	X		X		X	X	X			
•Emerg. Conserv. Prog.	32		X					±		X		
•Loans and Payments	33		X					±			X	
USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY	33											
•Value-added Ag Grants	33		X	X				X			X	X
•Renew. Energy Grants	33		X					X			X	
•Rural Enterprise Grants	34			X				±			X	
•Farm Labor Housing	34		X	X				±			X	
•Community Facilities	35			X				±		X	X	

## ATTACHMENT

### BRTF Illustrative Questions for the CA Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)

3. *How could the Department use its resources and expertise to help continue the practice of productive agriculture in the Delta, recognizing the significant changes expected to occur over the next 50 years?*
4. *In terms of agricultural practices, how could the Department implement the Task Force recommendation to increase the visibility of the Delta as a unique and valued area?*

It is difficult to separate these questions. In many cases, the programs and services that CDF and its state and federal agency partners deliver to support agriculture and rural communities will also support the Task Force's recommendation to elevate the Delta as a unique and valued area. Therefore, rather than segregate our description of the following programs and services according to these two questions, we list and describe them together. The matrix/table of contents that comprises the first two pages of this attachment identifies which of the two questions, as well as the other goals of the Task Force's Delta Vision, the following programs and services best address.

#### California Department of Food and Agriculture

**The Fertilizer Research and Education Program (FREP).** The purpose of this grant program is to "help provide growers and the agricultural industry with cost-effective practices to improve the efficient use of fertilizer and minimize environmental impacts." (Food and Agriculture Code Section 14611(b)) The Program was established to fund research and education projects through annual grants allocated on a competitive basis. Priorities for grants are set annually by a technical advisory committee of the Fertilizer Agricultural Advisory Board. In 2008, among the three priorities, grants will support research and outreach projects that improve nitrogen and phosphorus utilization efficiency in high production agricultural systems with consideration to environmental quality.

FREP is funded by a mil assessment on fertilizer sales, currently one mil. The level of the assessment can vary from year to year as recommended to the Secretary of Food and Agriculture by the Advisory Board. Total annual spending authority is \$800,000. The maximum annual grant amount is \$50,000. The maximum grant term is three years.

FREP was formed from the initiative of the fertilizer industry in 1993 following a three-year pilot period. The primary motivation for establishing the program was documentation of nitrate contamination of groundwater. Since its inception, water

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

quality protection has been a main focus. However, with the growing concern over greenhouse gas emissions, the Program has included air quality among its priorities.

This Program specifically addresses the first seven recommendations of the Vision. The Program funds projects that reduce contamination of water and air quality; increases water use efficiency to decrease surface and groundwater contamination; and, by reducing the entry of nutrients into waterways, reduces agriculture's impacts on aquatic ecosystems. Given the growing number of regulations affecting irrigated and animal agriculture with respect to water and air quality, this program contributes to the sustainability of agriculture by developing cost-effective means for regulatory compliance. Lastly, as agriculture is an integral part of the Delta's landscape and culture, by reducing its impacts on air and water quality, and ecosystems, FREP contributes to the health and sustainability of Delta human and natural communities.

For more information on the FREP Program go to:

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/fflders/frep.html>

**Office of Agricultural Security and Emergency Response (ASER).** This Office's mission is to manage an agriculturally-focused program relevant to the four phases of emergencies (planning, responding, recovering, mitigating), enabling CDFA to respond to future emergency events, including floods and disease outbreaks. The Office operates cooperatively within the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) that utilizes the Incident Command System that was developed by the fire service agencies' experiences in response to wildfires. Consistent with SEMS, the Office recognizes the primary role of field and local responders in an emergency, but is available in the chain of responsibility to contribute resources as field, local, area and regional responder' resources are exhausted. The Office coordinates with other state agencies and federal agencies in emergency response, and maintains lists of experts and technicians who can be contacted to assist locally as need arises.

Among the roles of this Office, if the response rises to the state level are: livestock evacuation and care in cooperation with local nonprofit animal care groups through the California Animal Response Emergency System (CARES); purchase of feed and provision of fresh water for evacuated livestock; stockpiling veterinarian supplies; maintaining relationships with veterinarians for evacuated animal care; and, the use of county fair grounds for evacuation centers for livestock and people.

The Office participates in regular regional and statewide training and emergency response exercises, which include planning for the transportation of agricultural products out of disaster areas. The planning and training exercises include those funded by the U.S. Office of Homeland Security's Golden Guardian program, which funds both tabletop and full-scale field exercises. The Office facilitates communication between county agricultural commissioners and the Office of Emergency Services in the

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

identification and location of agricultural assets of value to be rescued, and potential hazards to be controlled. As needed, the Office works with the California Highway Patrol via OES on the evacuation of hazardous agricultural materials or their safe disposal or storage.

Finally, the Office participates in the Mutual Aid System among neighboring states, which coordinates delivery of resources from neighboring states when needed. This system mirrors the county-level mutual aid system.

The ASER Office addresses the Vision's recommendations 2 and 12. Effective planning and training to minimize loss of agricultural assets, contributes to quicker recovery of agricultural production and the support of local and regional economies. Such readiness also contributes to Delta resiliency, the ability of Delta agriculture to "bend without breaking." Finally, this program contributes to the Vision's Near Term Action number 4, which addresses emergency management and preparation.

For more information on ASER, go to: <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ASER/>

**Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.** In 2004 the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act authorized the USDA to award grants to states to "enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops." Specialty crops are defined for the purposes of the Act as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops.

The Act authorized \$44.5 million for the life of the Program nationally. In 2007, approximately \$7 million was appropriated for the Program; \$8.4 was appropriated in 2008. Of these amounts, California received \$1.3 million in 2007 and \$1.2 million in 2008. Both the House and Senate versions of the Farm Bill reauthorization now under debate in Congress would continue this program as a baseline component of the Farm Bill. Both versions of the Farm Bill would authorize significantly greater levels of funding for a specialty crop grant program. One version authorizes \$365 million over the five-year life of the Farm Bill, about eight times the size of the current program. Assuming a similar allocation formula, California could receive as much as \$20 million per year from this Program.

The Act allows states broad latitude on how their allocation is used. In California, the Program is administered as a competitive grant program of \$50,000 to \$100,000 individual grants. The California Program gives weight to projects that involve a high level of collaboration, the development of transferable technologies, and that leverage other federal funds. California broadly defines the purpose of the Program to address five general areas of competitiveness, including environmental aspects of specialty crop production and marketing. For example, in 2007, the Central Coast Vineyard Team in Paso Robles received \$85,710 to gauge the consumer demand for "sustainably grown" grapes with the goal of using premium prices to support greater commitment of growers

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

to conservation farming practices. Other grants have supported research into more environmentally sensitive alternatives to disease control, including the application of integrated pest management; examining the potential impacts of climate change on crop production; developing pest and disease strategies for organic growers; developing hi-tech mechanical weed control systems as an alternative to herbicides; and, a study of the winegrape industry's greenhouse gas "footprint" in order to accelerate the development of mitigation measures and prioritize industry research needs.

Specialty crops have been a mainstay of Delta agriculture for many years. The grant program can be a tool for Delta tree, vine and row crop growers to improve their environmental performance, especially with respect to water use and quality, wildlife friendly practices, carbon sequestration and subsidence reversal. Also, because of its marketing and promotion focus, this grant program could support Delta branding, direct marketing and agro-tourism ventures that add value to Delta agriculture. Because of such potential uses, this Program could be used by collaborations of Delta conservation and agricultural interests to help achieve many of the Vision's recommendations, particularly Recommendation 2, valuing the Delta as a place. The grants could also be used to assist Delta growers address the water conservation and ecosystem restoration elements of the other first seven recommendations of the Vision.

For more information on the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program go to:  
[http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty\\_Crop\\_Competitiveness\\_Grants/Grants.html](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/Grants.html)

**Direct Marketing and Certified Farmers' Market Program.** In 1977, the Department of Food and Agriculture enacted regulations that enabled the establishment of farmers' markets by waiving certain packing, sizing and labeling requirements. In 1997 legislation was enacted to create the Direct Marketing Certified Farmers' Market Program. The law was intended to assist small growers directly market their crops to consumers while assuring product quality and safety. Now, more than 30 years later, there are approximately 520 farmers' markets certified in California, involving about 3,000, mostly small, family farmers.

The Program is implemented at the county level by county agricultural commissioners who issue certificates to farmers markets and participating growers. Commissioners assess certification fees that pay for inspection and general enforcement, which assures that only certified growers participate and that products are being marketed directly to consumers. Rules permit certified growers to sell each others' products in order to extend certified growers' access to a broader base of consumers, and to diversify offerings by growers at each market.

The State Program's role is to assure quality control by providing training classes to county agricultural commissioners on the certification, establishment and enforcement of farmers' markets. The state program staff also provides training to groups and

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

individuals desiring to initiate farmers markets. Further, state Program staff provides oversight of county enforcement, as well as assistance to county agricultural commissioners on difficult enforcement issues. Finally, the state Program provides similar assistance to, and oversight of, county farm stand, Community Supported Agriculture (a direct farmer-consumer subscription relationship program), and Farm Trails programs, which are directly regulated by county agricultural commissioners.

Program staff reports that there are few farmers' markets in the Delta, though Delta growers may participate in farmers' markets elsewhere.

This program directly addresses Recommendation 2 of the Blue Ribbon Task Force's Vision by promoting and assisting in the establishment of direct marketing opportunities for growers statewide, including the Delta. In particular, the Vision calls for increased Delta agricultural-based tourism and recreation. Farmers' markets, farm stands and farm trail programs contribute to this component of the Task Force's vision. In cooperation with county agricultural commissioners, entities like the University of California's Small Farm Center, and non-governmental organizations, such as agricultural land trusts and conservancies, this Program can make a direct contribution the vision of the Delta as a unique place due to its agriculture.

For more information on the Certified Farmers' Market Program, go to:  
<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/i & c/cfm.html>

**Division of Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services.** The exclusion, detection and eradication of non-native, invasive plants, animals and diseases are an essential part of the Department of Food and Agriculture's core mission. This Division is dedicated to, among other things, this part of the Department's mission. The Division operates border inspection stations and, in cooperation with the US Department of Agriculture, declares and enforces quarantines. The border inspection stations have been critical in detecting and excluding such aquatic invasive pests as the Quagga mussel, a freshwater mussel that poses serious threats to the Delta ecosystem and water conveyance infrastructure.

In addition to the direct ecological and economic threats posed by invasive species and diseases, by detecting and excluding these organisms, the State avoids the potential use of herbicides and pesticides that may pose their own threats to the Delta's ecosystem.

The Division also conducts regular visual and trap monitoring surveys to detect invasive plants and animals, pests and diseases that make it into the state. Once detected, the Division cooperates with other agencies, such as the University of California, county agricultural commissioners, USDA, California Department of Fish and Game, and the California Department of Boating and Waterways, to devise a plan for management and

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

eradication if it is determined that an organism poses a significant economic or environmental threat. The Division uses an integrated pest management approach that relies on the least toxic alternative to pest or disease control, and is supported by laboratory and research resources within the Department or in collaboration with the University of California, USDA and others.

Of particular interest to the Delta is this Division's collaborative work to control invasive aquatic weeds that threaten the Delta, such as Hydrilla, or that are already adversely impacting the Delta's aquatic ecosystem, such as water hyacinth. The Division works with the Army Corps of Engineers, Boating and Waterways and the University of California to conduct an annual survey of the Delta, including aerial hyperspectral analysis, to document the spread or control of these and other invasive plant species.

As indicated, the Division conducts its exclusion, detection and eradication programs in close collaboration with a number of other agencies, even when there is no threat to the state's food, fiber and nursery industry. For example, the Division, through standing agreements, lent resources and technical expertise to the Department of Fish and Game when the Quagga mussel was detected at the State's borders last year.

Invasive Species Council. At the state level, the Division is participating in an ongoing effort to form an Invasive Species Council to develop a state strategic plan for the detection and control of all invasive species. This would build on the recently adopted *California Noxious and Invasive Weed Action Plan (2005)*.

Weed Management Area (WMA) Program. Another element of the Division's management and eradication of non-native invasive plants is the Weed Management Area (WMA) Program. The Division receives a \$1.5 million annual appropriation for this Program. The Division uses the funding, in part, for competitive grants to support local Weed Management Areas working directly with county agricultural commissioners. The remaining portion of the funding is allocated to county agricultural commissioners for a wide variety of weed detection and control projects.

The Weed Management Areas are formed locally with the assistance of the Program's competitive grants and county agricultural commissioners. There exists at least one WMA in each county of the state. (The Delta is covered by five separate WMAs.) Four Division field biologists support the Weed Management Areas on a liaison basis. Besides addressing local weed control needs, the WMAs act as the eyes and ears of the Division's weed detection and management programs.

Vertebrate Pest Control Research Program. Another element of the Division's pest control activities of relevance to the Delta is the Vertebrate Pest Control Research Program and its Advisory Committee. County agricultural commissioners formulate and sell rodenticides to growers. A surcharge on these sales supports pesticide registration maintenance and research into new tools and methods to safely control rodent pests.

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

The Advisory Committee sets priorities and makes recommendations for the use of research funds, which amount to one million dollars annually.

One area of application of these funds that has been promoted by the University of California is to develop more sophisticated technologies for detecting and assessing Delta levee damage from rodents as a guide for prioritizing and targeting levee treatment resources. Though not yet funded, Division staff has confirmed that such research is consistent with the use of this funding source.

The work of this Division addresses a number of Delta Vision recommendations, particularly those dealing with ecosystem/estuary restoration (Recommendations 1 and 3), Delta agricultural sustainability (Recommendation 2), levee integrity (Recommendation 2), and maintaining the integrity of existing and new Delta water conveyance infrastructure (Recommendation 8) from invasive species such as the Quagga mussel. The services of this Division cross-over into several Vision recommendations, and thus support Recommendation 9, as well.

For more information on the Division of Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services, go to: <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/phpps/>

**The California Organic Program.** The Department's Organic Program is responsible for enforcement of the federal Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, and the California Organic Products Act of 2003. These statutes protect consumers, producers, handlers, processors and retailers by the establishment of standards under which fresh agricultural products/foods may be labeled and/or sold as "organic". The California Department of Health Services enforces laws pertaining to processed products marketed as "organic."

Enforcement activities are coordinated with the California Organic Products Advisory Committee, the USDA, and California County Agricultural Commissioners. Activities include: program administration; training of county agricultural commissioner, UC Farm Advisors, organic certifiers, and industry; initiation of complaint investigations; registration of private certification organizations; and, as an information resource on the California Organic Products Act and California's organic industry.

CDFA's Organic Program is funded entirely by industry registration fees, a portion of which is used to support county enforcement activities.

The Program addresses the Delta Vision's Recommendation 2 in facilitating the development of an expanding and profitable agricultural market niche, organically grown food. The Program, by supporting farming that limits the use of toxic agricultural chemicals, also indirectly addresses Vision recommendations addressing agricultural drain water quality and ecosystem health (Recommendations 7 and 3, respectively).

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

For more information on the California Organic Program go to:  
<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/i & c/organic.html>

**California Division of Fairs and Expositions.** The Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), Division of Fairs & Expositions provides fiscal and policy oversight of the network of California regional and county fairs. County fairs and expositions are, perhaps, one of the best vehicles for promoting California agriculture and its products. The county fairs of the five Delta Counties provide opportunities for promoting the unique growing environment, products, services and challenges of Delta agriculture. The oversight and support of county fairs by the Department contributes to Vision Recommendation 2, which calls for valuing the Delta as a unique California landscape and culture, including its unique agriculture.

For more information on County Fairs and Expositions, go to:  
<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Fairs & Expositions/>

**Office of Agricultural and Environmental Stewardship.** This Office resides within the Executive branch of the Department, providing advice and expertise on a variety of environmental issues that present opportunities for, and challenges to, California's production agriculture.

Dairy Quality Assurance Program. The Office represents the Department on the Dairy Quality Assurance Program, a program initiated by the dairy industry in response to growing environmental regulation and awareness. The Program relies on science to set environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards for the operation of dairies in California. The Program offers training to the dairy industry and oversees a third-party certification of producer compliance with the environmental and other standards of the program.

Dairy Technical Coordination Committee. The Office provides staff support to this interdisciplinary Committee, whose purpose is to identify research needs and funding in support of identified research to improve air and water quality performance of California dairies.

Bioenergy Action Plan. The Office represents the Department of Food and Agriculture on the Governor's Bioenergy Interagency Working Group (Executive Order S-06-06). The Action Plan must achieve five broad policy objectives having to do with increasing the state's production and use of bioenergy to reduce petroleum reliance and climate change and increase our reliance on renewable biological sources of energy. The plan holds potential for new income streams for all of California agriculture, including Delta agriculture, by creating opportunities for on-farm energy generation from energy crops,

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

agricultural organic waste or residues, including animal wastes that otherwise pose threats to water quality, and solar and wind sources.

Bay-Delta and Agriculture. The Office has participated in the CALFED Bay Delta Program from its outset, staffing the Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee's Working Landscapes Subcommittee, which advised the Ecosystem Restoration Program on the development of a competitive grant program that promoted the integration of wildlife habitat restoration and agricultural land management. The Office continues to participate CALFED via interagency agreement as a member of the Delta Vision staff team.

Delta Protection Commission (DPC). The Secretary of Food and Agriculture is a member of the Delta Protection Commission. The Director of this Office has been designated by the Secretary to be his representative on DPC since 2000. The mission of the DPC is to adaptively protect, maintain, and where possible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Delta environment consistent with the Delta Protection Act, and the Land Use and Resource Management Plan for the Primary Zone. This includes, but is not limited to, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and recreational activities. The Office participates on a Commission Agricultural Conservation Easement Committee, which is exploring potential strategies for the use of agricultural easements to protect agriculture in the Delta. Office staff has also participated in the development of a proposal to USDA for the establishment of a Delta Resource Conservation and Development Council. USDA approval is pending for this USDA-supported program, whose purpose is to "provide local communities with resources that can be used for local community development and resource conservation and utilization efforts." California currently has 12 RC&D Areas. (See page 27 for more details on RC&Ds generally.)

California Environmental Quality Act Implementation. The Office provides input on the environmental documentation of projects that pose impacts on the sustainability of California's agricultural resources. The input is normally in the form of comments on notices of preparation and environmental impact reports pursuant to CEQA and the federal equivalent, the National Environmental Policy Act. The Department collaborates with the Delta Protection Commission when commenting on projects affecting Delta agricultural resources.

U.S. Farm Bill Conservation and Energy Titles. The Governor has given the Secretary for Food and Agriculture the lead responsibility for working with Congress and USDA on the re-authorization of the nation's major farm and food policy, commonly referred to as the Farm Bill. This Office supports the Secretary in liaison with the Resources Agency and Cal-EPA, in making recommendations on the Farm Bill's Conservation and Energy Titles. Several of the programs in the current Conservation Title, as well as new programs proposed in the yet-to-be enacted Title, can play significant roles in helping to achieve the Task Forces' Delta Vision recommendations concerning flood management, ecosystem restoration, water quality protection and water conservation.

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

San Joaquin Valley Drainage Implementation Program. The Office participates as a member of the interagency Management Group that provides input on the implementation of the 2000 Drainage Management Strategy. The purpose of the Strategy is to reduce salt-laden agricultural drainage from irrigated lands along the west side of the San Joaquin Valley, and improve water quality for human consumption and environmental uses, primarily through improvements to water use efficiency. This program provides direct water quality benefits to the Delta.

Endangered Species. The Office has on staff a biologist with expertise on species protection and habitat conservation. The biologist is tasked to provide facilitation and technical assistance as requested and needed. Through this biologist, for example, the Office has played a key role in developing solutions to providing on-farm habitat for the wildlife on the verge of ESA listing, while concurrently protecting growers' economic sustainability.

CDFA Climate Change – Climate Action Team. CDFA is a member of the Governor's Climate Action Team (CAT) and leads one of eleven subgroups of the Team, the agriculture subgroup (AgCAT). The AgCAT identifies, prioritizes, and quantifies agricultural activities that can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester carbon, and produce renewable energy. The AgCAT will also be evaluating adaptation strategies for agriculture. These activities have direct application to meeting the goals and objectives of the Delta Vision Task Force. Examples include developing and demonstrating methods to reduce and reverse subsidence caused by Delta agricultural systems; developing and demonstrating new agricultural systems compatible with the Delta Vision, such as aquatic biomass systems for bioenergy production.

Pesticide Consultation and Analysis. This unit: (1) under a memorandum with the Department of Pesticide Regulation provides information to that Department regarding the economic impacts of proposed regulations on agricultural pesticide use on California agriculture; (2) analyzes available alternatives to pesticides; (3) has a continuous role in improving the reliability of the State's Pesticide Use Reporting database; (4) participates on the Department of Pesticide Regulations Pest Management Advisory Committee, which annually provides grants for the development of innovative pest management programs to reduce pesticide use; and, (5) conducts analyses of pesticide use trends with the goal of reducing pesticide risk and improving technology transfer.

This unit's work is relevant to the Delta Vision recommendations concerning Recommendation 2 and the economic sustainability of agriculture statewide, and Recommendations 3 and 7, that address toxics, estuary ecosystem health, and agricultural return water quality.

Watershed Management. Under an interagency agreement, the Office is assisting in the development of the Statewide Watershed Program currently housed at the

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

California Department of Conservation. The purpose of the Watershed Program is to advance sustainable watershed-based management of California's natural resources through community-based strategies. The Program engages its stakeholders through the Statewide Watershed Advisory Committee. The Program is an outgrowth of the CALFED Watershed Program, but is now developing a statewide California watershed management strategy under the direction of Resources Agency Secretary Chrisman. While in its formative stage of development, the Program also administers a \$1 million Watershed Coordinator grant Program, which supports the work of existing local watershed groups as well as the formation of new community watershed groups. California's 100+ Resource Conservation Districts make up about 60 percent of grant recipients of these grants, the balance are made up of a variety of other local community-based groups intent on improving their watersheds.

The Delta is home to at least seven resource conservation districts. Between these districts, and other existing or proposed Delta water management and conservancy organizations, this grant program could support the Delta Vision by bringing planning and organizational resources to the Delta for community-based watershed planning and management. Such support would help meet many of the Vision's recommendations, including greater recognition of Delta as a place, Recommendation 2, as well as those addressing water quality and quantity, ecosystem restoration and governance.

Sustainable Agriculture. This Office is involved in a variety of support and advisory roles to advance the sustainability of California agriculture, including Delta agriculture. An Office member was selected as a Roots of Change fellow and served in that role to develop a 30-year plan for a sustainable agriculture and food system for California, *The New Main Stream*. This non-profit organization's plan has been presented to the California Board of Food and Agriculture and has had a positive influence on the Board's decision to develop a strategic plan for for California agriculture, which is now in progress.

The Office participates as an agency advisor to the California Roundtable on Agriculture and the Environment, an organization of major agricultural, environmental and labor organizations seeking common ground for positive change that benefits California's environment, environmental justice and agricultural industry. The Roundtable has been a powerful influence on the ongoing Farm Bill reauthorization.

The Office participates on statewide and national boards and committees that advance a more sustainable agriculture and food system in California, including the annual Small Farm Conference governing board; the USDA Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education advisory board, which oversees the development of performance measures, issuing of grants and recognition of excellence among growers; and, the Governors Environmental and Economic Leadership Awards selection team. The Office is also applying to be a member of the Sustainable Agriculture Certification

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

Committee, a nonprofit organization that will be developing national standards for ANSI certification of sustainable agricultural operations.

Though none of these activities are Delta-specific, the expertise and relationships available through this Office could be of assistance in implementing recommendations of the Delta Strategic Plan, particularly as they pertain to the Delta as a place (Vision Recommendation 2).

For more information on the Office of Agricultural and Environmental Stewardship's services go to: [http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/aes/environmental\\_stewardship.html](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/aes/environmental_stewardship.html)

### County Agricultural Commissioners.

The system of California county agricultural commissioners is unique in the Nation, with its beginnings in 1881 in response to the rapid uncontrolled introduction of trees and vines to California, many infested with diseases and pests. Today, state law requires each county to have an agricultural commissioner appointed by the board of supervisors and certified as qualified for the duties by the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

The Commissioners carry out a regulatory program as set forth in state law under the program direction of the Secretary of Food and Agriculture and the Director of the Department of Pesticide Regulation. Among these responsibilities and duties are: pest exclusion, detection, eradication and, once established, management; pesticide use enforcement to ensure the safe and judicial use of legal pesticides to protect workers, consumers and the environment; seed certification for purity and viability; nursery inspection for pests, disease and plant quality; fruits, nuts and vegetable standardization for quality; certification and quality control of direct marketing venues such as farmers markets and produce stands; market promotion, such as "buy fresh, by local" programs; organic crop certification; plant material shipment; rodent vector control; weed management; agricultural burning regulation (and in some counties, air quality management); and, crop statistics reporting.

As employees of their counties, Commissioners also carry-out programs and duties that promote each county's agricultural industry. Some administer county right-to-farm ordinances; advise on county agricultural land conversion mitigation programs; promote locally grown products through farm trails and agro-tourism programs; assist local watershed coalitions of growers in voluntarily meeting Regional Water Quality Control Board Irrigated Lands Waste Discharge Waiver requirements; and, provide expert input on county general plan land use and agricultural elements. In the Delta, Commissioners also cooperate with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to monitor and control rodent damage to Delta levees.

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

Following are examples of activities and programs in which Delta agricultural commissioners are involved that add value to the Delta as a place.

**Sacramento County. Agricultural Tourism.** Working with the County's Economic Development Department and the County's UC Cooperative Extension Service, the Commissioner is involved in the development of a greater level of agri-tourism, such as farm tours, produce stands, farmers markets and farm stays in the Delta.

General Plan Support. The Agricultural Commissioner is working with the County's general plan update process on Delta agricultural economic development, including general plan policies that support agricultural sustainability and marketing.

**Yolo County. Agricultural Tourism.** The Commissioner is working with the County's Economic Development Director with funds from a state economic development grant to develop Clarksburg as an agri-tourism district. The project would direct funds for branding programs, and for the improvement of local infrastructure to support a greater level of tourist traffic and visitation.

Agricultural Districts. Through the Yolo County General Plan the County is considering other Yolo County agricultural regions that could be designated for special promotion and support as agricultural districts. The County is considering contracting with the UC Agricultural Issues Center to conduct a study (see Solano County, below) to help the County identify and map unique agricultural regions that could be marketed-based on their special agricultural landscape and crop characteristics.

Agricultural Ombudsperson. The Yolo County Agricultural Commissioner reports that the board of supervisors has approved included a position for an agricultural ombudsperson as one of the strategies in the County's draft general plan to assist growers in navigating the County's regulations, and to advance value-added agriculture operations on farms and ranches.

Yolo County Agricultural Futures Alliance (AFA). Though not an agricultural commissioner initiative, the commissioner serves as an active participant and advisor to the AFA. "An AFA is a county or community-based effort to sustain agriculture in perpetuity. The AFA is a burgeoning statewide alliance of county-based consensus building roundtables that develop guiding principles and intelligent policies focused on the challenges surrounding food production and agriculture." County AFAs are formed when local interests in agriculture invite the Ag Innovation Network ([aginnovations.org](http://aginnovations.org)), a non-profit organization, to help form and facilitate a local consortium of agricultural, community, labor and environmental interest in an economically and environmentally sustainable agriculture. The AFA identifies common ground agricultural sustainability issues and needs on which the full membership can agree to work. For example, the Yolo County AFA has developed a series of state legislative needs and found a county Assembly member to carry the bills. One of the bills toughens the state's Right to Farm

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

Ordinance law; another would streamline and expand direct marketing by allowing retail sales of value-added products at farm stands, and allowing farmers markets to sell to nongovernmental organizations, such as university food concessionaires and local restaurants.

(There are currently five county AFAs statewide, supported by local funding as well as funding from Roots of Change and other foundations.)

Locally Grown Marketing. The County has also received a \$120,000 grant to implement a Yolo County Food and Agriculture Marketing Program supporting, for example events that connect locally grown food, chefs and consumers in festive and educational food events.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Annuity Payments. Though not an agricultural commissioner program, the commissioner is working with the Yolo County Conservation Strategy Director to devise a less-than-permanent version of an agricultural conservation easement. These easements would mimic some of the USDA conservation programs that are based on ten to thirty-year easement agreements. Under the agreements, growers and the County would negotiate wildlife services that the grower would provide through wildlife friendly agricultural practices in return for annual payments reflecting the value of those publicly valued environmental services. This would be in contrast to the lump sum payments of permanent conservation easements and allow flexibility for adaptation to the dynamic nature of the landscape, climate, and agricultural markets.

**San Joaquin County.** Promoting Locally Grown Produce. The Agricultural Commissioner in San Joaquin County is involved in a county-level effort with retail grocery outlets and schools to promote the consumption of locally grown fruits, vegetables and nuts, both to promote healthier diets and support the local agricultural economy.

Agricultural Mitigation Policies. The Commissioner chaired a county committee that developed a one-for-one county agricultural land mitigation policy using either the dedication of equal quality and quantity agricultural land under a perpetual agricultural conservation easement, or the in lieu payment of an indexed mitigation fee sufficient to accomplish the same level of mitigation. The ordinance requires the county to coordinate with the local Habitat Conservation Plan and the Delta Protection Commission in implementing the mitigation program. (Yolo County also administers a similar mitigation policy working with the Yolo County Land Trust. In Yolo County, the mitigation policy allows a cash mitigation payment only for smaller acreage conversions.)

**Contra Costa County.** Brentwood Agricultural Land Trust. The Commissioner's office works in an advisory capacity with the Brentwood Agricultural Land Trust, which promotes locally grown products by investing in marketing opportunities.

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

Updating the requirements for Road stand farm Produce stands. The Commissioner is working with the county, affected cities and growers to seek by-in on a new ordinance governing the direct sales of local produce through roadside farm stands. The update of the roadside ordinance seeks to satisfy current building codes while making such direct marketing of local produce an economically feasible way for marketing local crops.

Buy Fresh, Buy Local. The County's Board of Supervisor's has directed the Agricultural Commissioner to find ways to promote locally grown fresh produce to help deal with childhood obesity and the unavailability of fresh, nutritional foods to low income families. Much of this effort will be educational according to the County Agricultural Commissioner. The second focus of this program will be to help the economic sustainability of primarily Delta agriculture.

**Solano County.** Agricultural Advisory Committee. Solano County is one among a number of counties that have established an agricultural advisory committee to advise the County Board of Supervisors through the Agricultural Commissioner on a broader array of issues affecting the sustainability of the County's agricultural economy. The Committee was created following an Agricultural Summit to gather information from the agricultural community on issues affecting agriculture and make recommendations to promote and support the County's farming industry.

The Committee's activities have included an agricultural tour for business leaders and governmental officials of Solano agriculture with a special focus on the Suisun Valley with the theme: Agricultural Processing – Adding value to Solano County Products. The Committee has also worked on the Solano County Land Trust's agricultural conservation easement plan; a right to farm ordinance; a Solano-Grown marketing plan; use of agricultural biosolids; Williamson Act improvements; zoning issues affecting agricultural labor housing; and, the relationship between agriculture and the County's habitat conservation plan.

The Solano County Agricultural Futures Project. At the request of Solano County, the University of California Agricultural Issues Center and the Solano County Cooperative Extension Service worked with the County Agricultural Commissioner on an 18-month comprehensive examination of the County's agricultural industry. The project resulted in four reports: (1) The perceptions of county farmers and ranchers on opportunities and needs; (2) An in-depth analysis of the economic roots of Solano County agriculture; (3) A comparison of how other counties in California support their agriculture, with a specific focus on regulating, protecting and promoting local agriculture; and, (4) a package of recommendations on how the County can support, protect and promote its agricultural economy. The project corresponded with the update of the County's general plan and the development of an agricultural element.

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

Solano County has recently approved an Agricultural Ombudsperson position within the Agricultural Commissioner's Office, as well as an agricultural planner within their Resource (planning) Agency. Both of these positions are intended to aid the viability and sustainability of Solano Agriculture through, in part, permit assistance.

(Yolo County is considering contracting with the Agricultural Issues Center to work with its Agricultural Commissioner to conduct a similar comprehensive analysis of its agriculture. This kind of comprehensive analysis holds potential for the entire Delta, either on a county-by-county basis, or as a unified Delta-wide analysis.)

Agricultural Vision and Economic Innovation for Suisun Valley. In March 2007, the Solano County Agricultural Commissioner received a report from the American Farmland Trust with recommendations for developing and promoting the Suisun Valley as a prominent local, regional and international agricultural production area, known for its wine, tree crops, vegetables, legumes and flowers. The study and report was commissioned by the County Board of Supervisors and was conducted with the assistance of, among others, the Agricultural Commissioner and the Suisun Valley Fund Advisory Committee (SVFAC). The work was also conducted in coordination with the County's general plan update and the work of the UC Agricultural Issues Center described above. Funding was provided by the SVFAC, City of Fairfield and the Solano Irrigation District.

The report identified an initial vision, and major goals, opportunities and obstacles for Suisun Valley agricultural success. Concerns included a lack of coordinated agricultural economic development and a prohibitive regulatory environment. Recommendations addressed agri-tourism, marketing and branding, needed infrastructure for value-added agricultural activities, and creation of a farmer-friendly regulatory environment that helps Valley farmers stay competitive locally and globally. The report's second half included case studies of successful examples from across the nation of how the SVFAC could implement its recommendations. Again, this kind of analysis serves as a model for similar studies targeted to specific agricultural areas within the Delta to support the Task Force's Recommendation 2, supporting and developing the Delta as a unique part of California's landscape.

**Parting Observations from Interviews with Commissioners.** Each agricultural commissioner serves at the pleasure of their county's board of supervisors. Some counties take a more "hands-off" approach to building their agricultural industry as a unique part of who they are; i.e., agriculture as part of the county's unique character as a place. Others encourage their agricultural commissioners to work with their agricultural agency partners and others to aggressively protect and promote agriculture as a vital component of their county's economy and image, including agriculture as a destination for commerce and tourism. The above services in which each of the five Delta county agricultural commissioners are involved provide a menu of agriculturally

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

based opportunities that the Task Force can support to raise the visibility of the Delta as a place.

For more information on individual County Agricultural Commissioners, go to: [http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/county/county\\_contacts.html](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/county/county_contacts.html) . For information on Agricultural Commissioners generally, go to: <http://www.cacasa.org>.

### Cooperative Extension Service/County Farm Advisors

“University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE), [UC’s Division of Agricultural and Natural Resources] outreach arm, has farm, 4-H, and nutrition, family and consumer sciences advisors based in more than 50 county [Farm Advisor] offices. In addition, Cooperative Extension specialists are headquartered at UC Berkeley, UC Davis, and UC Riverside, where they conduct research and coordinate advisors’ activities. As a land-grant institution, the Cooperative Extension mandate is tied to the welfare, development, and protection of California agriculture, natural resources, and people.

**County farm advisors’** work is aimed at enhancing California agricultural productivity and competitiveness. Together with farmers, pest control advisors, and industry representatives, they identify current and emerging agricultural opportunities and problems. The advisors collaborate with campus-based Cooperative Extension specialists and Agricultural Experiment Station scientists to research, adapt, and field-test agricultural improvements or solutions and promote the use of research findings.” (Quote taken from UCCE website homepage, cited below)

Farm Advisors and Technology Transfer. The Cooperative Extension agents interviewed all stressed that direct transfer of knowledge from applied research to growers was the most important work that they do. They stressed that conveying information on new crops and management practices to increase profits, reduce costs and protect and enhance the environment into the hands of growers requires longevity and sufficient staff to maintain regular contact with the growers. The County Cooperative Extension Directors emphasized the importance of the time (10 years according to one interview) it takes to learn the landscapes and landscape processes of their counties, as well as the culture, personalities and politics of the farming communities they serve.

Farm Advisors describe their work as creating platforms on which they facilitate farmer-to-farmer transfer of new innovations; are able to get new research and technologies into the hands of private pesticide control advisors, who are among the most common advisors for growers on pesticide use and pest control; and, collaborate with agribusiness, private and other public researchers, and regulators.

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

Farm Advisors as conduits of multiple sources of information. Farm Advisors gather information from research not only from the UC Cooperative Extension system of research, but from the research gained from all of the nation's land grant universities, and from around the world from such sources as US Agency for International Development. A rice extension specialist noted the benefit to the Delta of his interaction with counterparts at the University of Florida on the 30-years of research they have done on rice cultivation of peat soils of Lake Okeechobee. This information helps California growers remain competitive in world markets.

In responding to the Task Force's Question 2, each of the County Farm Advisors, as well as several Delta-focused Cooperative Extension research specialists, were interviewed to discuss unique services and practices that they provide in the Delta parts of their counties. Following are activities of particular relevance to the Delta Vision that exemplify the actual and potential roles that UC Cooperative Extension can contribute to achieving the Task Force's Recommendation 2.

Rice in the Delta and Water Quality. Cooperative Extension researchers are engaged with CALFED funding support, and in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, Contra Costa County, and a private company, to develop best management practices for the production of rice. The focus of the work is to develop crop and water management practices that improve the quality of drainage water that flows back into the Delta for subsequent municipal use; i.e., the reduction of dissolved organic carbon, which can create hazardous compounds once treated with halogens for domestic use.

Rice in the Delta and Subsidence Management. Cooperative Extension researchers are currently working with the Department of Water Resources to study the affects of rice in the Delta on the subsidence of peat soils. In addition, researchers are analyzing the carbon sequestration values of rice cultivation relative to the greenhouse gas emissions of wetlands.

Conservation Tillage. Cooperative Extension researchers have promoted conservation tillage in the Delta, particularly with corn. In addition to research trials, they conduct grower field days demonstrating reduced tillage equipment important to minimize soil loss from wind erosion, and thus, subsidence. Conservation tillage as a management practice lowers costs (reducing cultivation and energy use); reduces aeration and compaction of organic soils, and thus, subsidence; and, leaves more crop residue on the ground to help offset subsidence from the oxidation of peat soils via cultivation. The Nature Conservancy's farm manager on Staten Island uses conservation tillage, which requires changing to new types of cultivators, and reports that the savings in fuel and labor due to the reduced passes of equipment over the soil has paid for the new equipment costs.

Post-harvest flooding. Farm Advisors and others have advocated flooding corn and rice fields following harvest to speed soil incorporation of crop residue and slow oxidation

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

and subsidence. The practice also supports migratory waterfowl that are drawn to the flooded fields to feed on residual grain and water fauna.

Irrigation and drainage water quality. Cooperative Extension and private researchers will be conducting research into the use of various types of coagulants, particularly iron compounds, to precipitate organic carbon and sediment to improve the quality of agricultural return water flows to Delta waterways. The researchers will be assessing potential toxicities from the coagulants and their precipitates, as well as documenting the subsidence-reversal benefits of the precipitate deposition.

Irrigation Management Practices and water quality. Extension researchers are studying the effects of drainage ditch depth on the amount and quality of agricultural drainage from Delta farmed islands. Shallow ditches (not now the standard) may result in more water moving up via evaporation or down as groundwater, rather than out into Delta waterways with its potential agricultural contaminants.

New and Alternative crop development for the Delta. The Cooperative Extension's small grains specialist promotes the Delta as a uniquely qualified growing region for legumes, such as lima beans and alfalfa. He advocates legumes as a money-making crop because of their all-season potential in the Delta's climate, but also for their nitrogen-fixation as an alternative to nitrogen fertilizer amendments and the potential for water contamination from nitrates. He also promotes legumes as cover crops between vineyard and orchard rows to reduce soil oxidation and wind erosion. (As an aside, the specialist noted that alfalfa in the Delta has been characterized as a low-value crop, but that because of the high prices of grain and dry rangeland conditions, alfalfa has supplanted tomatoes and even some perennial crops.)

Research specialists are looking at wild rice for the Delta. They admit that wild rice is an industry in its infancy in the Delta (with only one grower wild rice) and new varieties are probably needed for its success in the Delta.

While research is being done on the cultivation of rice in the Delta to accomplish environmental goals, such as subsidence reversal, UC Extension is partnering with the Rice Experiment Station to develop new strains and varieties of rice to meet particular Delta environmental, management and productivity needs.

New approaches to Old Delta crops. Farm Advisors and Extension research specialists are conducting continuous trials in the Delta on such standards as tomatoes, asparagus, potatoes and wheat, to develop improved varieties, cultural practices and new pest management systems that address increased regulatory demands for air and water standards. In the face of declining Delta pear markets and acreage, work is being done by Cooperative Extension agents to promote different varieties of pears, and different approaches to pear cultivation that increase density of plantings and reduce the costs of management and harvest.

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

Water Conservation. Farm Advisors and Extension specialists are working with growers on deficit irrigation trials as a strategy to increase water use efficiency and improve crop quality.

Value-added Agriculture and Marketing. Farm Advisors in urban counties (which include the Delta counties) work with both urban and agricultural clients. The Sacramento County Farm Advisor reported working with the County, campus-based Extension Specialists and the Farm Bureau to target the Delta for agri-tourism. (See Sacramento County Agricultural Commissioner services described previously.). In addition, the Farm Advisor is working with this collaborative to promote locally grown Delta products with county supermarkets. As part of this work, the Farm Advisor is involved in developing a program of regulatory assistance for Delta growers who are attempting to add value to their operations via direct and local marketing and agri-tourism.

Invasive Species and urban water quality Extension. Cooperative Extension and Sea Grant (marine/estuarine and coastal resources-focused version of Cooperative Extension) support a Marine Advisor who has been newly assigned to Contra Costa County with a strong programmatic focus on extension to the Bay-Delta community on controlling invasive aquatic species and protecting water quality. Her activities include curriculum develop for schools, and workshops and educational materials for the maritime industry, recreational boaters, local government, and water districts. She also develops protocols and training for community-based monitoring for such invasive species as the zebra mussel. The advisor also conducts non-point water pollution control education in urban areas, for example promoting the use of non-toxic paint for the hulls of recreational boating industry and consumers.

There is unanimity among the Farm Advisors and Cooperative Extension Specialists interviewed that they remain committed to Delta issues even though they are stretched further than ever before because of budget constraints. They pointed out that there are now only three Farm Advisors covering five Delta counties, and of those three, less than a third of their time is available to support Delta agriculture.

For more information on UC Cooperative Extension and Farm Advisors, go to:  
(<http://ucanr.org/ucce.shtml>)

California Department of Pesticide Regulations (DPR)

DPR administers regulations that govern the certification and use of pesticides. While historically these programs have focused on agricultural pesticide use, non-agricultural (e.g. urban) pest management practices have also been addressed by DPR. California is one of only a few states that impose a rigorous science-based process for registering

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

a pesticide prior to its use. DPR also administers a process that allows an individual or organization to present credible documentation to DPR regarding adverse impacts that a product(s) may have on humans or the environment. After reviewing the documentation, DPR may conclude that the product's registration warrants reevaluation.

DPR administers five programs that hold potential value for the Delta.

Alliance Grant Program. This program supports grants to grower cooperatives and commodity boards to develop new and innovative strategies for pest control that minimize impacts on the environment and human health. The focus of the grant is on comprehensive strategies that involve the development and promotion of practices that have wide application and transferability across a commodity. It also includes an effective outreach and education program for growers and Pesticide Control Advisors. Recent examples of work supported by the grant include the development of integrated pest management practices for the almond and stone fruit industries in collaboration with the University of California's Cooperative Extension Service.

Integrated Pest Management Innovation Award Program. This program promotes innovative approaches to integrated pest management (IPM) that reduces the adverse impacts of pest control to the environment and human health. In 2007, the Lodi Rules for Sustainable Winegrowing of San Joaquin County won the award.

Pest Management Branch Targeted Pesticide Management Assistance. This Branch works with UC Cooperative Extension Service and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to coordinate the designation of pesticide hotspot priorities. The collaboration helps to bring to bear public and private funding and technical assistance for growers in areas where pesticides present, or have potential to present problems to environmental quality.

Small Grant Program. Yet in the conceptual stages, this DPR program would provide small grants to individual or small groups of growers to promote innovation in pest management that protects the environment.

Science in the Certification and Use of Pesticides. DPR invests significant research dollars on the safety of pesticides on food safety and the environment. For example, DPR, in collaboration with other agencies and the University of California, is investing evaluating impacts of pyrethroid pesticides in the Delta, where little is known on the contribution of this agricultural and urban landscape pesticide to the pelagic organism decline (POD). This research includes the development of best management practices for the use of pyrethroid pesticides, regardless of their contributions.

For more information on the programs of the Department of Pesticides Regulation, go to: <http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/>

### California Department of Conservation

**The California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act.** The Department of Conservation (DOC) administers this agricultural land and open space protection program, which protects roughly 16 million acres (about half) of the state's grazing and farmland. The protection afforded is by an enforceable contract between the landowner and participating local government whereby the landowner is taxed at agricultural use value and the state and local government are assured that the land will not be used for anything that is incompatible with agricultural uses. The contracts are for a rolling 10-year term and may be nonrenewed by either party, which triggers a 9-year wind-down.

In the 1990s, the Farmland Security Zone (FSZ) program was added to the Williamson Act statutes, which provides for 20-year contracts in exchange for enhanced property tax benefits and greater protection from surrounding incompatible uses and infrastructure. Like the Williamson Act, the FSZ provides for program opt-out by either contractual party that is followed by a 19-year expiration period. Both programs allow for public termination of contracts for an overriding public purpose. Also, both programs allow for immediate termination of contracts in extraordinary circumstances that require the documentation of rigorous findings and the payment of a stiff cancellation penalty to the state.

The participating local governments receive annual state Open Space Subvention payments to help off-set the loss of property tax revenue that results when land enters a contract. The state currently pays about \$40 million in subvention payments.

Much of the Delta's farmland is under the temporary protection of the Williamson Act or FSZs. Depending on individual contract use restriction, however, not all contracts may be consistent with the ultimate land use recommendations of the Delta Vision strategic plan.

**California Farmland Conservancy Program Act.** Created in the early 1990s, the Conservancy Fund can receive funds from a variety of sources (so far, primarily state bond funding) for grants to local (and state) conservancies, land trusts and government entities for three purposes: acquisition of temporary fee title interests to protect agricultural land until it can be resold with the development rights removed; purchase of essentially perpetual agricultural conservation easements; planning/capacity-building grants to prepare local entities for the effective use of easement purchase grant funds and other farmland protect tools; and, grants for easement-protected land improvements to enhance the land's agricultural use.

The program has had success in leveraging other state, local and federal easement funds to protect 11,000 acres of agricultural lands through 28 projects. While the acquisitions, themselves have protected key agricultural properties and generated

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

greater public awareness of the need to conserve the state's agricultural land, 11,000 acres pales in comparison to the roughly 40,000 acres of agricultural land the Department of Conservation reports that is converted to urban uses each year. Currently the Program is on its last installment of bond funding.

While funding for Program easements can help achieve the goals of the Delta Vision for a future Delta with an agricultural landscape, the Program's planning grants may be of equal value as the envisioned Delta governing entity seeks to implement easement, as well as other strategies for agricultural land conservation in the Delta.

**Resource Conservation Districts.** In response to the massive soil erosion of the Dust Bowl, Congress passed the Standard Conservation District Act, authorizing states to adopt the model Act and create state conservation district programs comprised of three components: A state support and oversight program; authorization for the locally initiated formation of conservation districts to address local conservation problems; and, the authorization for local districts to establish memoranda of understandings with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to set priorities for the local application of federal conservation programs. California established such a program in the 1940s, including a state Division of Resource Conservation; a statewide Resource Conservation Commission to coordinate state, federal and local conservation priorities and programs; and, state statute for the local initiation, establishment and operation of resource conservation districts (RCDs). There are now 102 RCDs in California serving nearly 90 percent of the state. While still in statute, the Commission no longer is active and the state Division was victim of budget cuts in the 1970s. Currently, the Department of Conservation operates the Watershed Coordinator grant program, which supports many RCD-led watershed management programs. The Department also provides training and information in support of RCD capacity and to support compliance with State guiding statutes. RCDs are involved in a wide variety of both agricultural and urban conservation programs from water quality to Endangered Species Act Safe Harbor Programs, leveraging state, federal, local and foundation funding.

There seven RCDs that cover parts of the Delta. RCDs are the primary channel to access USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation financial and technical assistance, as well as federal Farm Bill conservation title funding. Coordinating and collaborating with Delta RCDs should be a priority of any future Delta Vision governance entity as a vehicle for working with agricultural landowners and state and federal conservation agencies.

**Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.** The Legislature created this program in 1982 to map and categorize the state's farm and grazing land, to monitor the use and conversion of these lands, and report to the Legislature on the conversion of the state's agricultural land. The program uses a geographic information system to generate biennial Farmland Conversion Reports and county-level Important Farmland Series Maps using a modified version of the USDA's classification of soils for their potential

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

agricultural use. The Program has now been tracking the use and conversion of California agricultural land for 25 years. The reports and maps are not only valuable monitoring tools, but are used by many cities and counties as base information for general planning. The mapping categories are also used by the California Environmental Quality Act in assessing the significance of project impacts on agricultural land.

Most recently, the Program has started mapping land fragmentation by ranchette development, often an invisible form on conversion of agricultural land out of agricultural use. Ranchette development has been cited by land use experts and Delta growers as the main land use threat to agricultural land in the Delta. Funding the Department to document ranchette conversion of Farmland in the Delta would provide a useful tool for the strategic application of agricultural and habitat land protection programs by a future Delta governance entity.

**Watershed Program.** This program was previously described under the Department of Food and Agriculture's Office of Agricultural and Environmental Stewardship Program. Through its advisory council, the development of a statewide watershed strategy, and \$9 million in Watershed Coordinator Grants, this program supports the locally led management of natural resources on an ecosystem (i.e., watersheds) basis. This program provides another option to support a Delta-wide "watershed" program as the organizing structure for addressing a variety of resource issues.

The Department of Conservation recently absorbed the CALFED Watershed Program. A statewide citizen's advisory committee has been appointed by the Secretary of Resources to develop a new statewide approach to watershed management in California. The committee has held over 30 regional outreach sessions and is in the stage of developing a strategic plan for a statewide watershed program.

For more information on the Department of Conservation's agricultural conservation programs, go to: <http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/Pages/Index.aspx>

#### U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

NRCS was established as the Soil Conservation Service in the 1930's to assist landowners conserve natural resources, primarily soil and water. Now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service, NRCS administers conservation technical and financial assistance primarily for agricultural land resource conservation, but increasingly for urban conservation assistance, as well. The NRCS delivers its programs with input at the state level from the State Technical Advisory Committee, made up of state-level stakeholders. At the county level, input from RCDs, landowners and other local agency stakeholders help direct funding and technical assistance to local needs within the broad guidance provided by the state and national priorities.

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

Assistance is delivered to landowners primarily via RCDs. Increasingly, assistance is delivered to groups of growers working through watershed groups, and other resource conservation-based local organizations of growers. NRCS programs are often delivered in collaboration with other federal and state agency programs on an ad hoc basis.

Though budget cuts have eroded field technical staff, the NRCS funding assistance programs remain based on direct landowner technical assistance and planning. Among the financial assistance programs most relevant to the Delta are:

**Environmental Quality Assurance Program (EQIP).** EQIP is a cost-share program, normally 50:50, to support the installation of conservation practices on-farm or –ranch. Soil, air and water quality, and wildlife conservation, are among the main purposes of the Program. In the Delta, to conserve the peat soils, practices of particular interest would be tree and inter-row annual crop windbreaks, cover cropping, and conservation tillage.

Both House and Senate versions of the proposed reauthorization of the Farm Bill's Conservation Title propose a new EQIP element, the **Regional Water Enhancement Program**, which includes the Sacramento-San Joaquin River basin as a regional priority. If enacted and funded, this program could have significant implications for implementing the Delta Vision in and upstream of the Delta watershed by providing regional, multi-grower application of EQIP dollars with a focus on floodwater management and water quality.

A component of the EQIP program is the **Conservation Innovation Grants Program (CIG)** intended to stimulate development and adoption of innovative conservation strategies and practices. The CIG grants are awarded at both the national and state level to address national and state priorities. Grants must involve the development of new technologies that could become new EQIP supported practices, and that provide benefits over a large geographic area, such as the Delta. The grants require a 50 percent state or local match. Applications can be accepted from states, local organization, non-governmental organizations and individuals. CIG grants could have particular value for the development and implementation of studied land and water management strategies that improve water quality, levee habitat, or subsidence stabilization or reversal, among others.

**Wetland Reserve Program (WRP).** Like EQIP, California has done well in receiving funding for this program over the years. The program targets marginal agricultural lands for the long-term or permanent creation of on-farm wetlands. The program involves technical assistance in planning and constructing wetlands. Long-term (10-30 years) and permanent easements and their associated agreements implement WRP. Benefits include wildlife conservation, floodwater retention, water quality improvement and income from hunting recreation for participating growers. WRP could support on-island wetlands on low spots in Delta farm fields.

**Floodplain Easement Program.** The Emergency Watershed Protection-Floodplain Easement Program) functions in much the same manner as the WRP. Unfortunately, like the WRP it would exclude agriculture uses. Otherwise it could function like DWR's Floodplain Corridor Protection Program, which encourages floodplain compatible agriculture as a conjunctive use. This program could support the creation of such flood corridors as the much-proposed San Joaquin River By-pass. Seeking amendment of the program to allow agricultural use of protected lands as occurs, along with habitat management and recreation, in the Yolo By-pass, could be a priority of a Delta governance entity.

**Farm and Ranchland Protection Program.** This Program is the federal equivalent of the state Department of Conservation's Farmland Conservancy Program, offering funding for the local acquisition of voluntary agricultural land conservation easements. If future bonds continue to support the state's agricultural easement program, this federal program could leverage state, local and foundation funding to protect agricultural land in the Delta. California has not typically received the level of federal funding for this program warrant, in part due to the lower level of state commitment to the California Farmland Conservancy Program relative to similar programs in other regions of the Nation.

**Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).** The WHIP program encourages the creation of high quality wildlife habitats that support wildlife of national, state or local significance through technical and financial assistance to landowners or groups of landowners for upland, wetland, riparian and aquatic habitats. Landowners enter into cost-share agreements from 5-10 years based on mutually developed habitat development plans. Shorter-term agreements are possible for emergency recovery purposes; longer-term agreements of 15 years or more are available and result in a greater level of federal cost-share. California has not received a significant level of WHIP funding compared to other states, but this program holds particular promise for the Delta given its flexibility and focus on the integration of planning, technical assistance and cost-share.

**Conservation Security Program.** This is intended to be a program that rewards existing conservation by providing a continuous stream of payments at various levels depending on the comprehensive nature of the conservation practices; i.e., whole farm versus partial farm, and multiple resource issue treatment versus single issue treatment. The program's goal is for whole-farm/ranch, integrated treatment of all applicable conservation issues. Enacted as an entitlement program for all who qualify, appropriations have never been sufficient to support more than a fraction of the need and the program has been operated on a rotational priority watershed basis; i.e., specific watersheds are designated each year and landowners within the qualified watersheds are eligible to apply. Currently, in California, the Salinas Valley watershed is the targeted watershed for the program. Parts of the Delta watershed have qualified

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

in the past and it is plausible with state input to the NRCS via its State Technical Advisory Committee, that the immediate Delta hydrologic unit as identified by DWR in the State Water Plan could be considered for the program in the future.

**Resource Conservation and Development Council.** This program was previously described under the Department of Food and Agriculture's Office of Agricultural and Environmental Stewardship's activities. In summary, a local group wanting to use an area's natural resources in a renewable fashion to support economic development can apply to the USDA Secretary of Agriculture to form an RC&D area and council. If successful, USDA would establish the RC&D area, and an NRCS staff manager and an operating budget would be awarded to support the RC&D council. California currently has 12 RC&Ds, with applications for three more pending, including an application for a Delta RC&D. A Delta RC&D could serve as a Delta economic development agency as a tool of a future Delta governance entity. For example, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy works closely with five Sierra RC&Ds to balance economic development with conservation of the natural resources.

For more information on NRCS conservation programs, go to:

<http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/>

#### USDA-Farm Serves Agency

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers and manages farm commodity, credit, conservation, disaster, and loan programs as laid out by Congress through a network of federal, state and county offices.

These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of the agricultural industry and to help farmers adjust production to meet demand. Economically, the desired result of these programs is a steady price range for agricultural commodities for both farmers and consumers.

Specific services and programs of FSA that could support the recommendations (particularly recommendations 1 and 2) of the Delta Vision are described below:

**Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).** A huge program nationally, it is of minor importance in California because CRP target lands must be environmentally sensitive lands (originally, highly erodible lands) that support *USDA commodity crops*. Being a specialty crop state where the commodity crops grown are not typically cultivated on erosion prone lands, California only has a few hundred thousand acres enrolled in the program. Another cause for low California participation is that the rental rates are set nationally and are not competitive with California's high land values and rents. Nationally, 35 million acres are under CRP contracts; California's total is almost 130,000 acres mainly in the hill lands of Yolo and San Luis Obispo Counties.

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

CRP enrolls eligible lands into 30-year contracts under which the landowner receives rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland. Specific environmental benefits targeted by CRP are water and wind erosion control, water quality protection, and habitat cover.

**Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).** This is a special program within CRP, which holds more potential for California. The program is a partnership among producers; tribal, state, and federal governments; and, in some cases, private groups. CREP addresses high-priority conservation issues of both local and national significance, such as water quality, loss of critical habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife species, soil erosion, and reduced habitat for fish populations such as salmon. A CREP is a community-based, results-oriented effort centered on local and state participation and leadership.

While the CREP is still limited to USDA commodity crops, such as corn, wheat and rice, it allows greater flexibility on the part of FSA with respect to allowed rental payments that participating landowners can receive. This added fiscal incentive, plus the fact that much of Delta agriculture supports USDA commodity crops, makes the CREP an interesting option for retiring sensitive Delta agricultural lands, keeping the lands in private ownership and keeping a revenue flow to the lands to support not only their management, but the Delta communities their former agricultural use supported. Finally, CREP uses 30-year term contracts, rather than perpetual easements, allowing greater flexibility for their adaptive management over time.

A specific CREP project begins when a state, Indian tribe, local government, or local nongovernmental entity identifies an agriculture-related environmental issue of state or national significance. These parties and FSA then develop a project proposal to address particular environmental issues and goals. In 2002, the Department of Food and Agriculture, with the support the Department of Fish and Game successfully secured designation by FSA of the Delta as a Conservation Priority Area, a required designation in order to qualify for a CREP program. The priorities identified were water quality improvement and wildlife habitat improvement. As landowners can derive income from hunting on CREP lands, the CREP can also support recreation goals of the Delta Vision.

State, local or nongovernmental partners must match the FSA fiscal commitment to a CREP area at a minimum of 20 percent. Currently, the only CREP area in California is the Central Valley CREP. Under this program, the state's match is in the form of perpetual Wildlife Conservation Board-funded easements on lands warranting permanent retirement. According to FSA standards, these easements target marginal agricultural lands.

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

Nationally, the Everglades, the Upper Mississippi River Valley and the Chesapeake Bay watershed are prominent CREP projects. With a concerted effort on the part of a Delta governance entity, a CREP program could be established in the Delta to provide another tool to address not only water quality and wildlife habitat, but subsidence through the creation of wetlands on marginal agricultural lands and islands.

**Continuous CRP.** Another offshoot of the CRP program that could have application in the Delta is the “Continuous CRP” program. The program is termed “continuous” because enrollment, unlike CRP, is accepted at any time, not just during specified annual bid periods. The program is intended for environmentally sensitive lands for specified conservation practices. Contracts are 10-15 years in duration. The focus of the program is on linear tracts of land such as riparian buffers, wildlife habitat buffers, wetland buffers, filter strips, and grass waterways. Other eligible lands can include wetland restoration and shallow water areas for wildlife. The landowner receives rental payments, practice installation cost-share, and technical assistance. Rental bonuses can be paid for special practices, which could help make this program of greater interest to California growers when combined with land under CREP contracts.

A new program under the Continuous CRP is the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE). The SAFE program is intended to address state and regional high-priority wildlife objectives that help meet the specific needs of high-value wildlife species (with an emphasis on Endangered Species Act listed or candidate species, as well as species of particular economic or cultural importance). The program allows greater flexibility to create essential habitat. Participating landowners receive annual rental payments, incentives and cost-share assistance. As in all CRP programs, only USDA commodity growers are eligible, which would include rice, corn, and wheat in the Delta. To participate in the SAFE program, an application must be submitted from local, regional or state agencies or organizations that have expertise and first-hand knowledge of the need. The program has a national acreage cap of 500,000 acres.

**Emergency Conservation Program (ECP).** The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) provides emergency funding and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters and for carrying out emergency water conservation measures in periods of severe drought. Among the practices supported is livestock water provision during the emergency. Funding for ECP is appropriated by Congress. Financial assistance is in the form of 75 percent cost-share up to \$100,000 per landowner if approved by the state FSA committee, or if approved at the national level. FSA’s companion agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical assistance in applying the cost-share funds for conservation practices. The goal of the Program is to return the damaged land to productive capacity. This program could have value to certain Delta lands in the event of a flooding disaster.

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

**Loan and Direct Payment Programs.** FSA administers year-to-year USDA commodity loans to supplement conventional bank loans. FSA also administers operational loans to help farmers transition to conventional bank loans, and loans for beginning farmers. By and large, FSA reports that Delta growers do not take advantage of FSA loans, even though a significant portion of Delta production is of USDA commodity crops.

Direct payment to growers of USDA commodity crops are made annually based on target prices determined by a market-driven formula. These programs have come under criticism in recent years with the high commodity crop prices, but during years when prices are low, defenders of the programs argue that they provide a farm-stabilization function important to farmers and rural communities.

For more information on FSA programs, go to:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/stateoffapp?mystate=ca&area=home&subject=landing&to pic=landing>

### USDA Rural Development (RD)

The mission of RD is to “increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life in rural communities” through housing assistance, community infrastructure improvements, new business development, and job creation. The RD official interviewed for this response claimed that “RD is USDA’s best-kept secret.” RD administers over 40 different rural assistance programs of which four have particular application for the Delta Vision’s Recommendation 2.

**Value-added Producer Grants.** Producers and producer groups and agricultural cooperatives are eligible to apply for these grants. California typically receives \$1 to 2 million for the program. Individual grants range from \$50,000 to \$300,000 for a broad number of uses that add value to agricultural production and products. Planning, new product development, marketing studies, product promotion and working capital are among the purposes of this program. A recent program focus has been on developing uses of crops and crop residue for bio-energy. Both USDA commodity and specialty crops are eligible. There are no limitations based on rural population size limits, as in many other RD programs.

**Renewable Energy and Efficiency Grant and Loan Program.** The purpose of the program (also known as the Section 9006 program) is to purchase renewable energy systems (wind, solar, biomass, geothermal and hydrogen producing), and make energy efficiency improvements to existing operations. This program is allocated about \$25 million per year nationally. California typically gets about \$1 million per year. Both versions of the proposed Farm Bill reauthorization would include this amount in the program in the first year of reauthorization, with subsequent increases for the duration of the five-year Farm Bill.

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

Farmers, ranchers and rural business owners are eligible to apply for the grants and loans. The Program is available to individuals and entities in rural areas other than cities of more than 50,000. Typical grant amounts range from \$2,500 to \$500,000 per year. (Last year, a California dairy received \$500,000 for a digester to turn dairy waste into energy.)

The grants and loans are not research and development focused, but support well-vetted technologies. The grant and loan applications are complicated, taking \$2,000 to \$20,000 to prepare, and, thus, are better suited to larger growers who can hire professional grant writers, or to cooperatives and partnerships that have access to grant-writing expertise. Grants are awarded based on a nation-wide competitive process; the loans are continuously available and have a \$10 million cap not to exceed 50 percent of the project cost.

This program appears to offer an opportunity for resource-based economic development in the Delta given the Delta's winds, tidal flows, potential for biomass from algae production and invasive plant species, and energy crop production.

**Rural Business Enterprise Grants.** These grants target small rural businesses to support economic development. The program typically awards about \$50,000 per grant. Competition for grant funding from this source is less, but the grant amounts are smaller than other RD grant programs. California normally receives about \$1 million per year for the grants.

The program offers a great deal of flexibility for uses of the grants. The grants can be used to set up revolving loan funds, provide technical assistance to businesses, develop infrastructure, provide job training or conduct feasibility research. While the grants are not available to farm businesses, they can support farm-related businesses. For example, mobile livestock slaughter facilities and installation of bio-security systems have been funded in the past.

Applicants must be nonprofit economic development groups, tribes or public bodies (cities and counties). Rural areas other than cities of more than 50,000 in population are eligible. Grants are available once a year through a competitive application process administered by the state RD office.

**Farm Labor Housing Loan and Grant Programs for on or off-farm housing.** These programs have funded over 100 farm labor housing projects throughout the State. Funds are available for rental subsidies or construction of new off-farm housing using one percent, 33-year loans. Grants can be made to municipalities, nongovernmental housing organizations and corporations. In California, most applications for grant funds leverage state Joe Serna grant funds, low-income housing tax credits, and/or other funds. Of particular interest to Delta legacy towns, grants and loans can support

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
CDFA Response to Illustrative Questions 1 & 2  
May 12, 2008

rehabilitation of historic and/or substandard housing. Rental subsidy and off-farm loans and grants are available on a competitive basis.

On-farm agricultural labor housing loans are eligible for one-percent, 33-year loans on a non-competitive basis, contingent on assurances that residents actually work on the farm where the housing is built.

Loans are either direct USDA loans or guaranteed commercial loans. Generally, there are no population restrictions for determining areas eligible for grants or loans. These loans and grants are administered out of the state RD office.

**Community Facilities direct and guaranteed loans and grants.** Loan fund allocations to California average \$5 million per year and are available to cities, towns and unincorporated areas of less than 20,000 persons. Loans are for essential infrastructure and equipment, such as clinics, fire stations and trucks, recreational facilities, or day care facilities. USDA-guaranteed loans are made to commercial lenders, nonprofits, tribes and public agencies.

California receives about \$1 million for grants to communities that have difficulty qualifying for RD loans. Grants average \$30,000. Grants will pay for up to 75 percent of a project's cost. Both loans and grants are available year around.

For more information on RD Programs, go to: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/>