BCDC SUISUN MARSH POLICY REVIEW KICK OFF

Thursday February 13, 2020

View of the Suisun Marsh from
Rush Ranch Open Space Preserve

©Rachel D. Wigginton

HOUSEKEEPING

- Sign-in sheet and nametags
- Meeting materials
- Bathrooms
- Water fountain
- Drinks and snacks

View of the tidal channel with common reed in the foreground

MEETING AGREEMENTS

1. Everyone’s input is equally valued
2. Respect differences, and appreciate other points of view
3. Ask genuine questions
4. Stay engaged
5. Everyone contributes to our success
6. Expect and accept that this work is ongoing

AGENDA

2:35 - 2:50 Introductions

2:50 - 3:10 Presentation: Background Information

3:10 - 3:15 Break

3:15 - 3:25 Presentation: What has changed?

3:25 - 4:25 Discussion: How do we continue to preserve and protect a functional marsh?

4:25 - 4:30 Next Steps

WHY ARE WE HERE TODAY?

Aerial view of Suisun Marsh showing the uplands, the marshlands, and nearby urban development

INTRODUCTIONS

What is your name?

What is your affiliation?

For you, personally, what is the most valuable thing about the Suisun Marsh?

View of the Suisun Marsh landscape

©Shannon Skalos
©Shannon Skalos

SUISUN MARSH HISTORY: PRE-MARSH ACT

Steve Chappell

Executive Director

Suisun Resource Conservation District

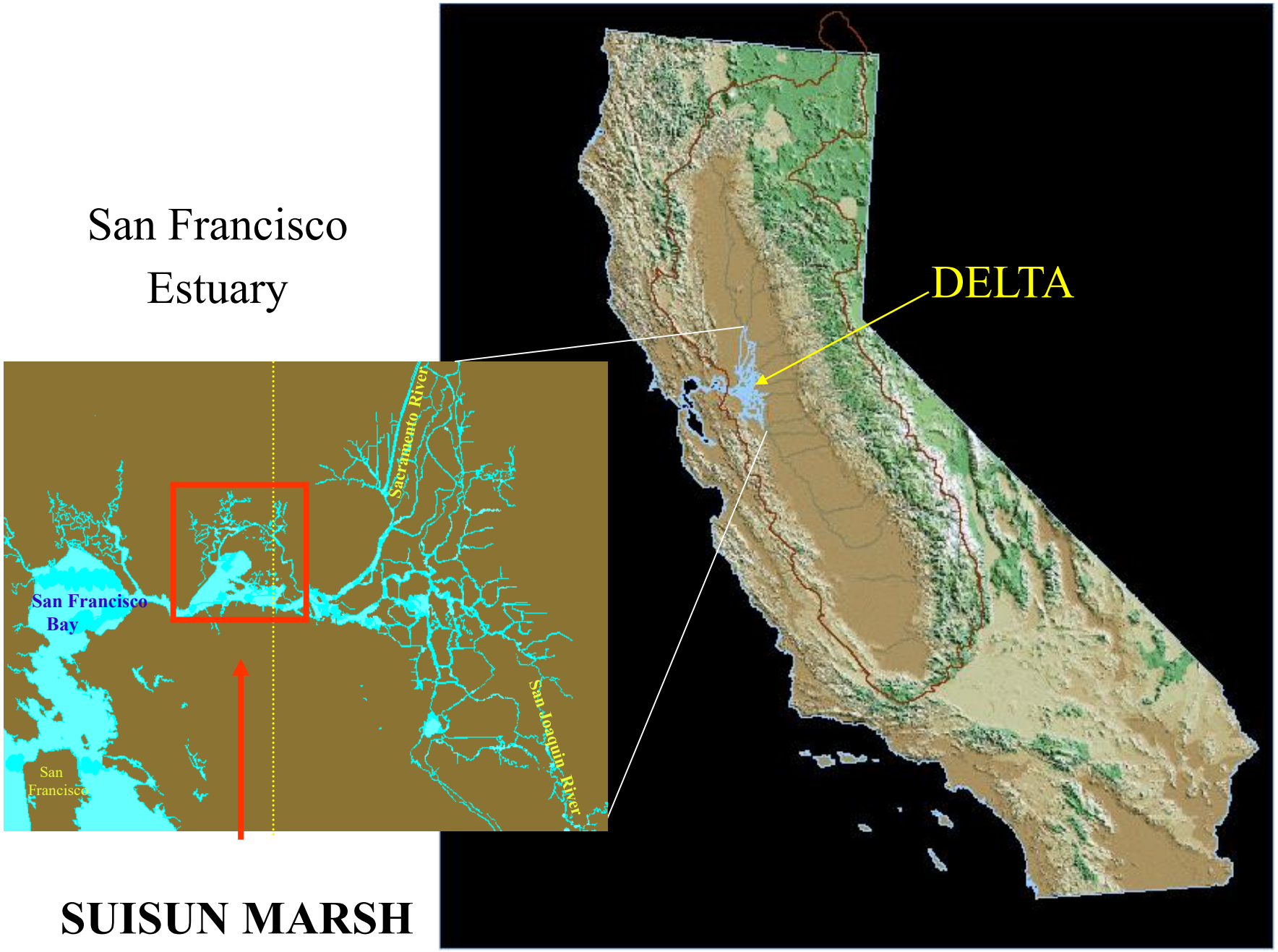
View of Denverton Pond

©Shannon Skalos
©Denise Colombano

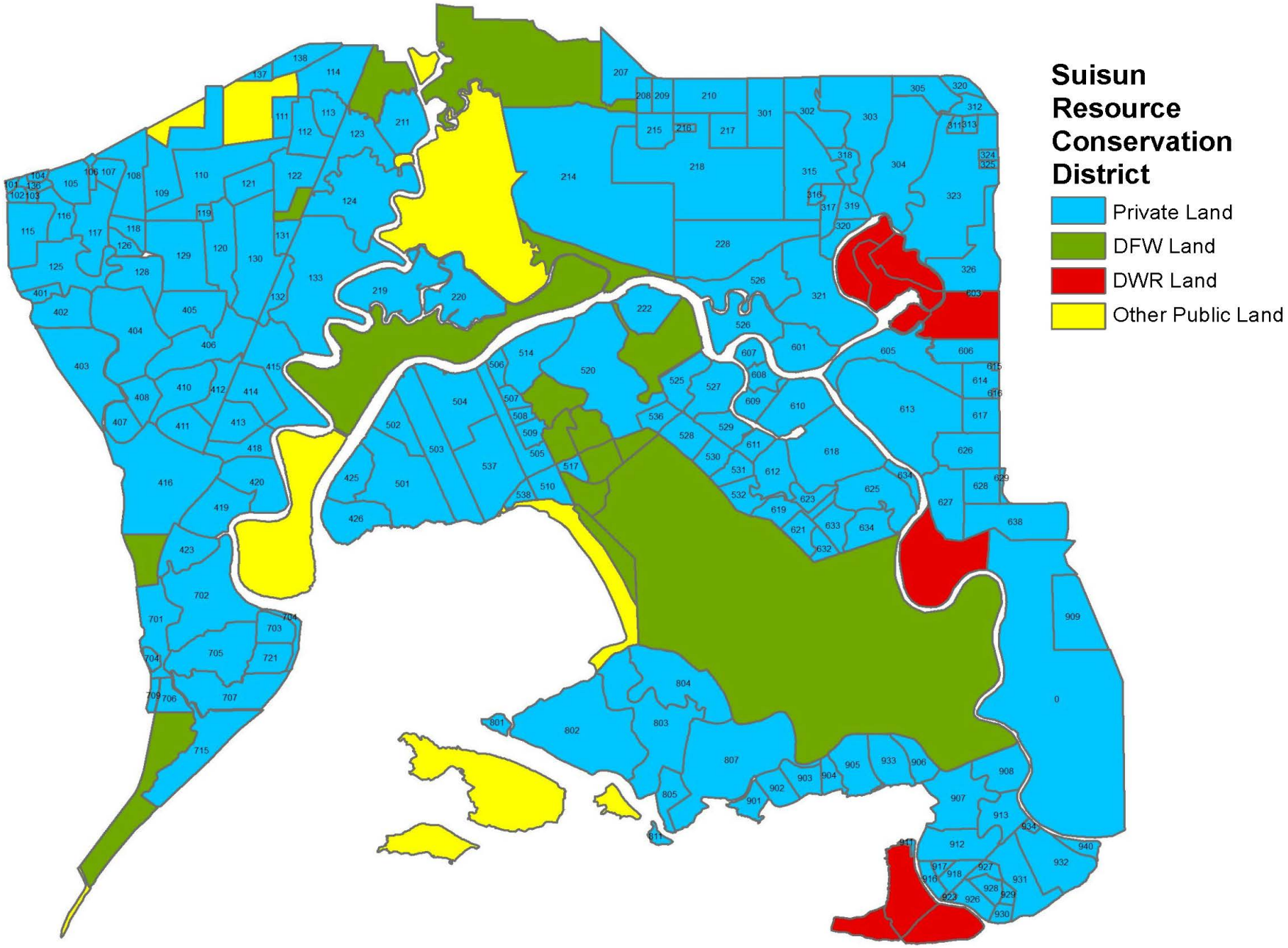
SUISUN MARSH HISTORY

Presented by Steven Chappell,
Executive Director, Suisun RCD

San Francisco
Estuary



SUISUN MARSH


Suisun Resource Conservation District
Private Land
DFW Land
DWR Land
Other Public Land

Suisun Marsh Facts

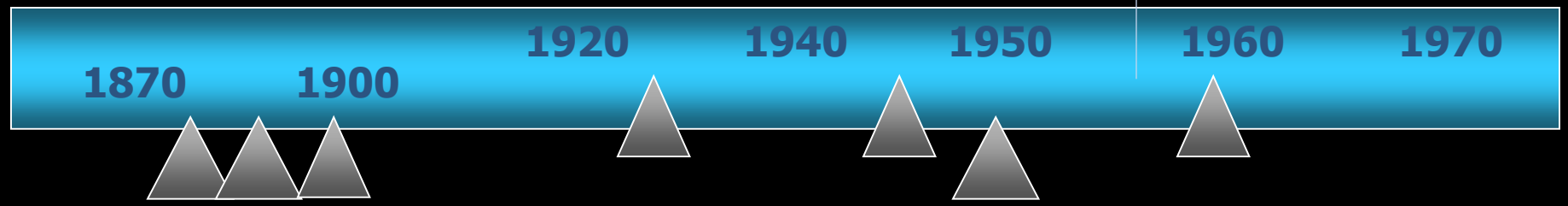
- **Largest contiguous brackish marsh in the United States**
- **Encompasses 10% of California's remaining natural wetlands**
- **Acreage Breakdown**
  - 52,000 acres managed wetlands
  - 6,300 acres tidal wetlands
  - 30,000 acres of bays and sloughs
  - 27,000 acres of upland grasslands

The Suisun Marsh is a Brackish Marsh

Not Fresh Water Wetlands

A salinity gradient exists north to south and east to west in the Suisun Marsh

EARLY HISTORY - 1880'S TO 1960'S



1878's Construction of the Southern Pacific RR Initiated

1881 Establishment of the first organized waterfowl hunting club in the western Suisun Marsh

1890's Diking of the eastern region of the Marsh for Agriculture, dairies, beef production

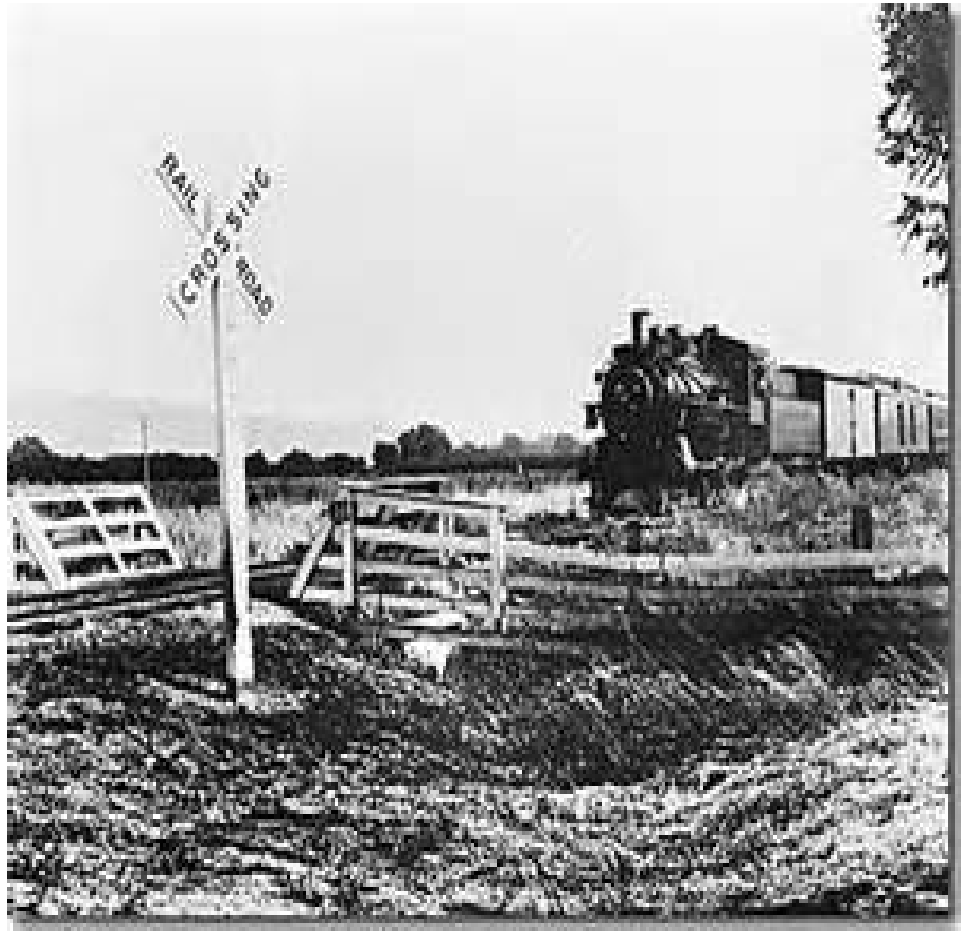
1931 DFW purchases Joice Island (1st State Wildlife Area) to reduce waterfowl crop depredation in the Central Valley

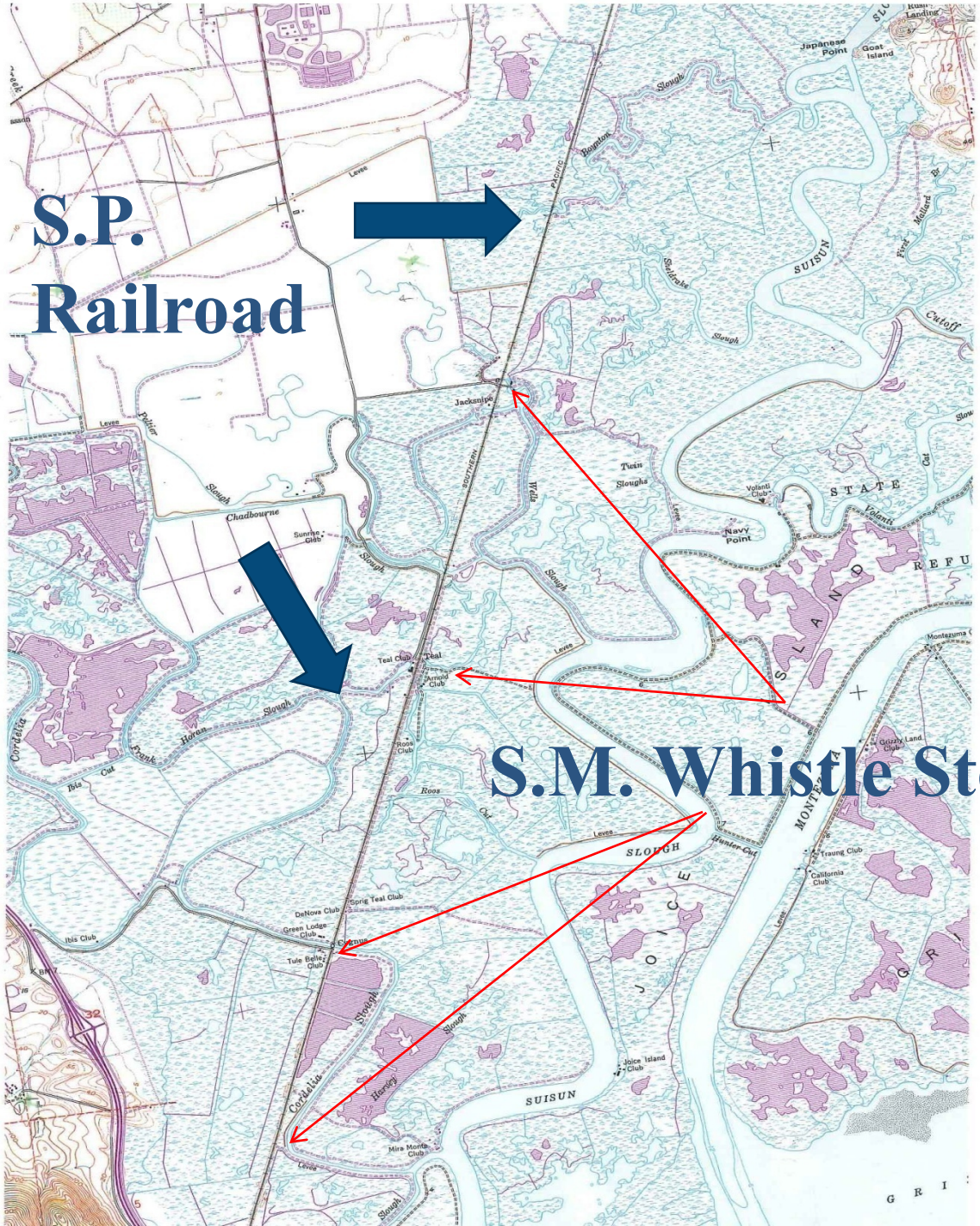
1940-50 Development of the Central Valley Water Projects

1950 Decline of Suisun Marsh Agriculture

1960's Most of the diked areas are managed as seasonal wetlands for wintering waterfowl

S.P. RAILROAD = EASY ACCESS TO WATERFOWL HUNTING GROUNDS



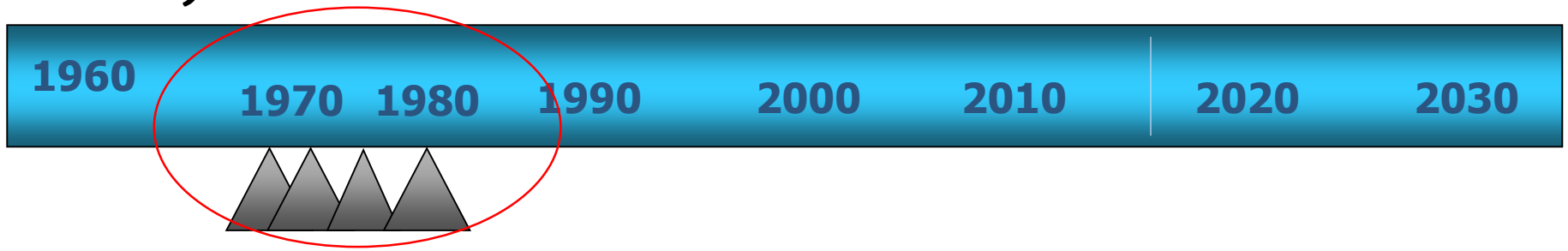

S.P.
Railroad
S.M. Whistle Stops
Jacksnipe
Teal
Navy Point
Chadbourne
Cordelia
SUISUN
SLOUGH
JOICE
STATE
Joice Island Club
Mira Monte Club
Ibis Club
Tule Belle Club
Green Lodge Club
DeNova Club
Sprig Teal Club
Roos Club
Arnold Club
Teal Club
Sunrise Club
Volanti Club
Traung Club
California Club
Grizzly Land Club
Montezuma
Japanese Point
Goat Island
Levee

Early Agriculture

Early Agriculture

Suisun Marsh Wetland Provide Critical Habitat To Resident & Migratory Wildlife

LATE 60'S, 70'S & 80'S



1963 Suisun Soil Conservation District formed by landowners
1970 Suisun Resource Conservation District formed from SSCD

1974 Suisun Marsh Preservation Act passed by the Legislature
1976 Suisun Marsh Protection Plan completed by DFG and BCDC

1976 BCDC's Suisun Marsh Protection Plan ***Adopted***

1977 AB 1717 - Suisun Marsh Preservation Act

1978 Water Rights Decision 1485

1984 DWR Plan of Protection EIR

1987 Suisun Marsh Preservation Agreement Signed

ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 1717
THE 1977 SUISUN MARSH PRESERVATION ACT

"The Legislature hereby finds and declares that the Suisun Marsh, represents a unique and irreplaceable resource to the people of the state and nation; and that it is the policy of the state to preserve and protect resources of this nature for the enjoyment of current and future generations."

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

PLAN OF PROTECTION FOR THE SUISUN MARSH including ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Central District
February 1984

1978 SUISUN MARSH SALINITY STANDARDS ESTABLISHED

-
- **All Water Year Types**
- **Except During Deficiency Period**
-
- October 19.0
- November 16.5
- December 15.5
- January 12.5
- February - March 8.0
- April – May 11.0
- _____
- **Deficiency Period (As defined in the SMPA Agreement)**
-
- October 19.0
- November 16.5
- December – March 15.6
- April 14.0
- May 12.5

PRIMER OF BCDC'S LAW AND POLICIES IN THE SUISUN MARSH

View of the Suisun Marsh landscape

©Rachel D. Wigginton
©Shannon Skalos

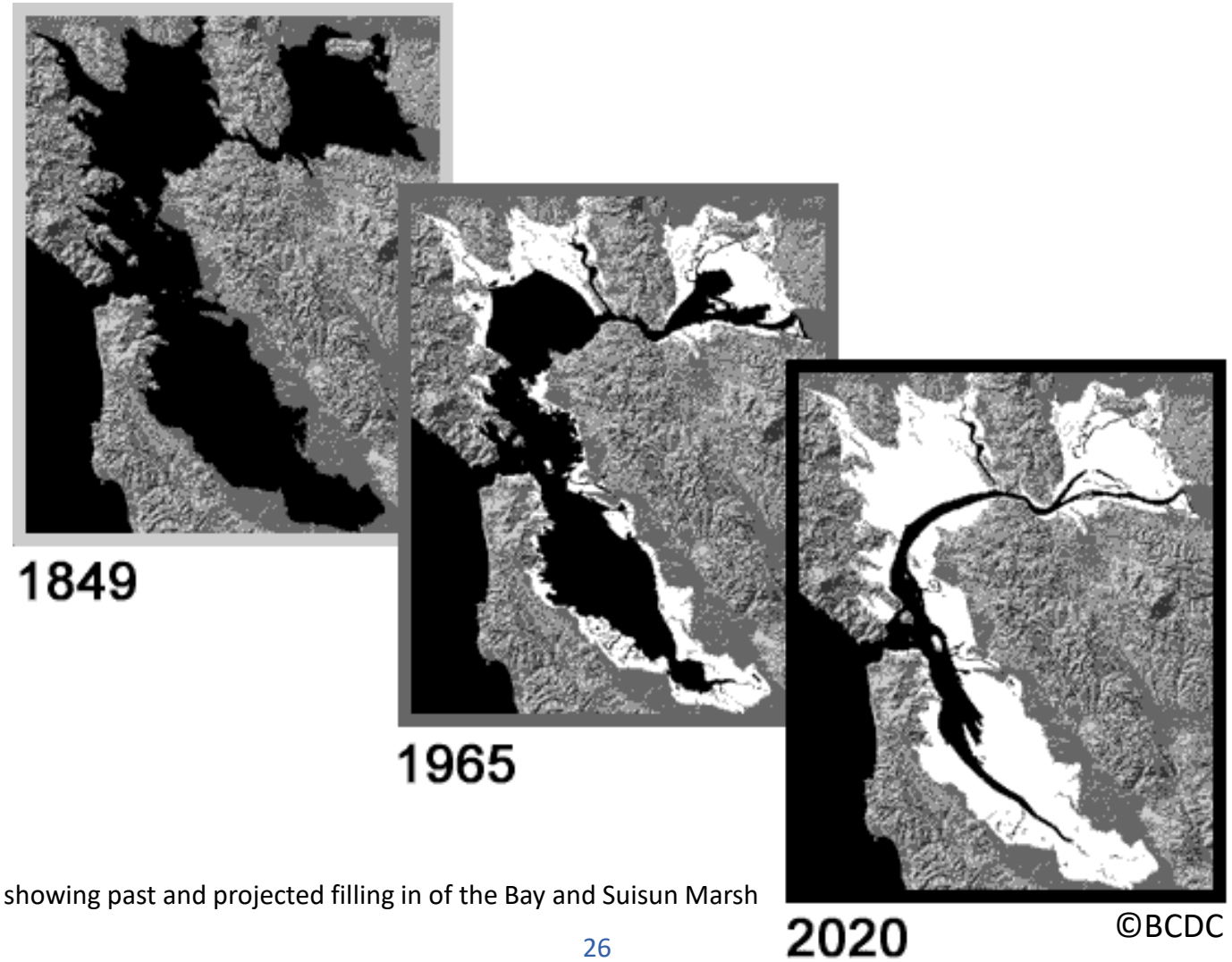
WHO ARE WE?

Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC)

A state agency with regulatory and planning duties. We work regionally across the San Francisco Bay and the Suisun Marsh

Map showing the extent of BCDC's jurisdiction

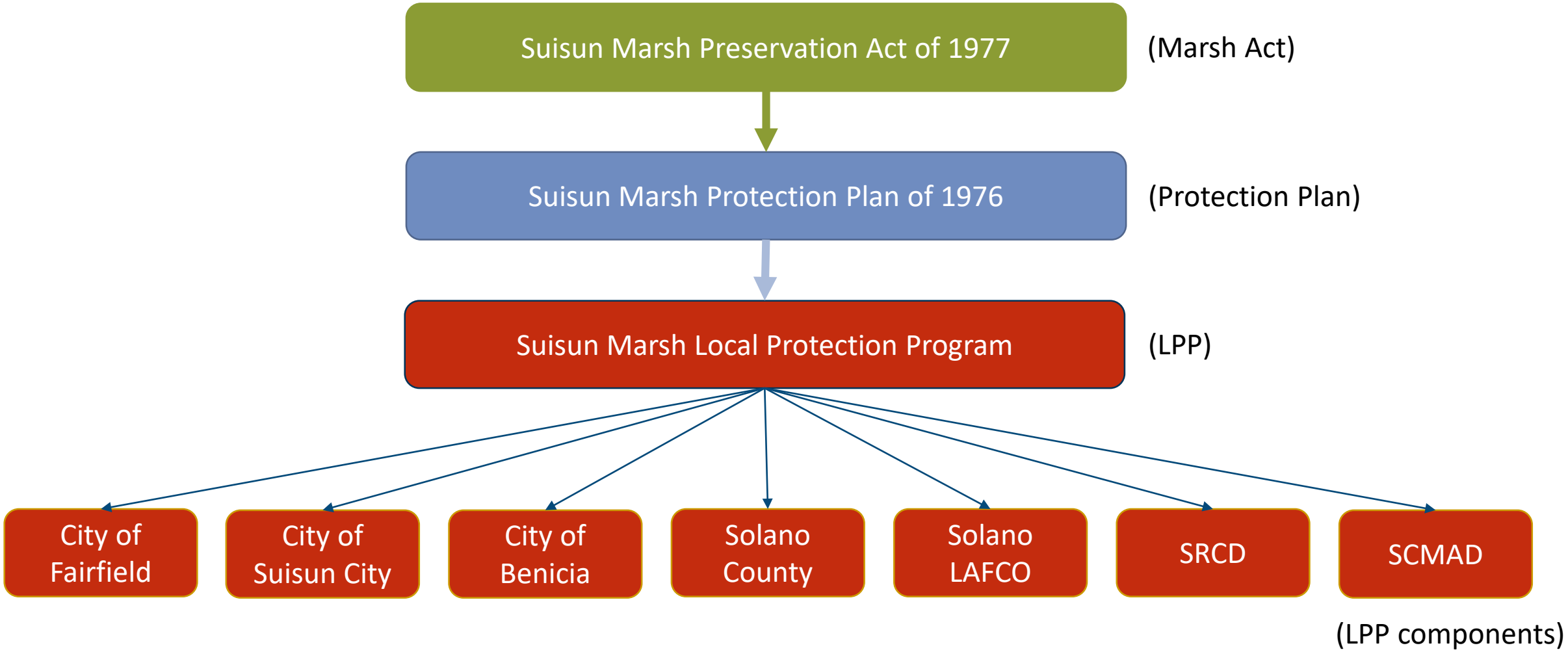
BCDC WAS CREATED IN RESPONSE TO THREATS TO THE BAY



Maps showing past and projected filling in of the Bay and Suisun Marsh

©BCDC

BCDC'S SUISUN MARSH LAW AND POLICIES



MARSH ACT OVERVIEW

Composed of 7 chapters:

I. General Provisions
II. Definitions
III. Responsibilities of the Commission
IV. Responsibilities of the Other State and Federal Agencies
V. Responsibilities of the Commission and Local Agencies
VI. Development Controls
VII. Judicial Review, Enforcement, and Penalties

Hunters in a bird blind in Suisun Marsh

MARSH ACT GENERAL PROVISIONS

Legislative Findings and Declarations (§29002)

- The marsh "...plays an important role in providing **wintering habitat for waterfowl of the Pacific Flyway**; that during years of drought the area becomes particularly important..."
- The marsh "...provides **critical habitat** for other wildlife forms, including such **endangered, rare, or unique species**..."
- "...that the existence of this wide variety of wildlife is due to the relatively large expanse of **unbroken native habitat and the diversity of vegetation and aquatic conditions** that prevail in the marsh..."
- "...that man is an integral part of the present marsh ecosystem and..."
- "...represents a **unique and irreplaceable resource to the people of the state and nation**..."
- "...future residential, commercial, and industrial developments could adversely affect the wildlife value..."
- "...it is the policy of the state to **preserve and protect resources of this nature for the enjoyment of the current and succeeding generations."**

Note: bullets and emphasis added

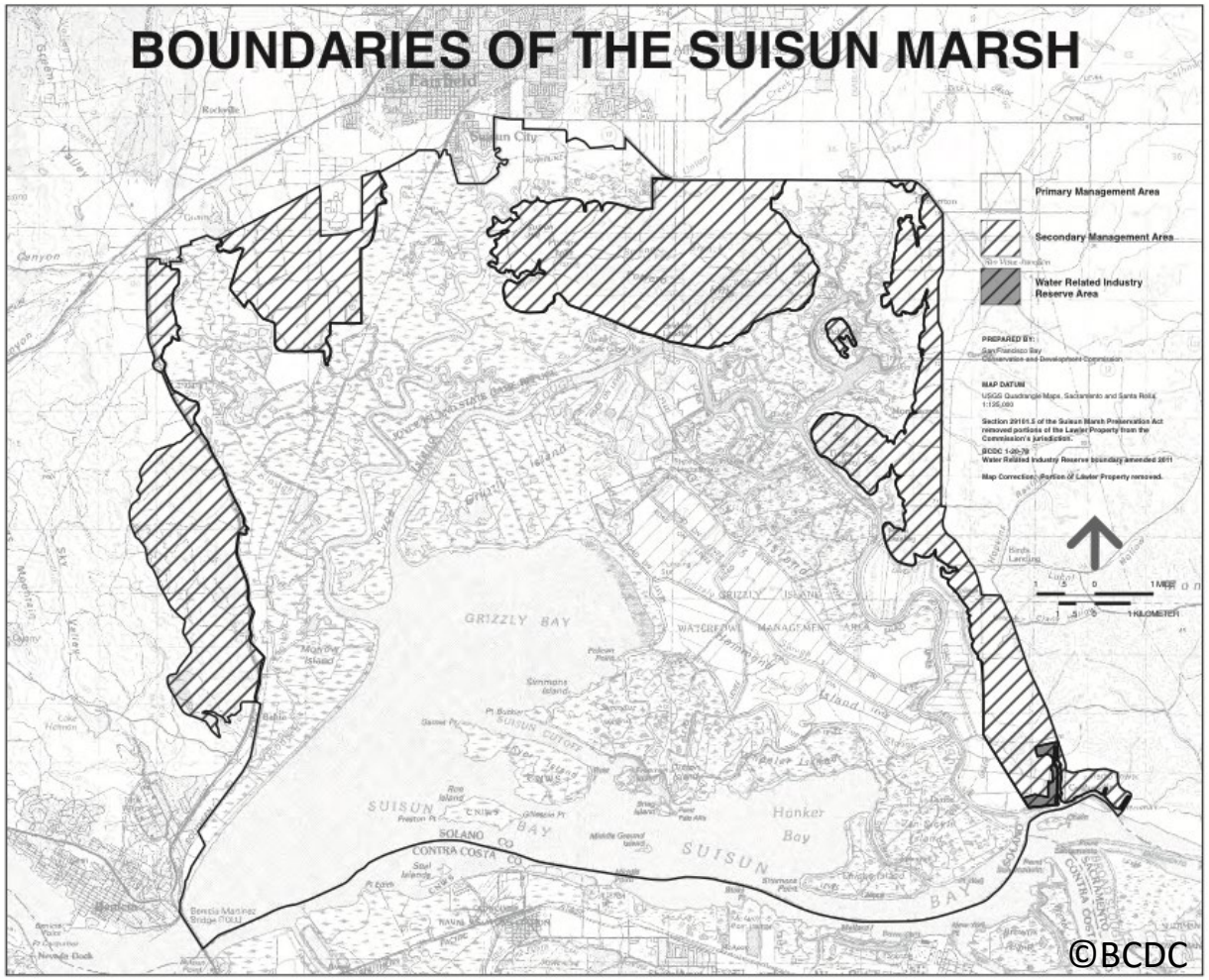
MARSH ACT DEFINITIONS

Primary Management Area

"water-covered areas, tidal marsh, diked off-wetlands, seasonal marsh, and lowland grassland…"

Secondary Management Area

"upland grasslands, cultivated lands, and low-lying areas adjacent to the primary management area"



Map showing the boundaries of the Primary and Secondary Management Areas

WHO ISSUES MARSH DEVELOPMENT PERMITS?

- In the Primary Management Area
  - BCDC
- In the Secondary Management Area (with a certified Local Protection Program component)
  - Solano County
  - Fairfield
  - Suisun City
  - Benicia

Construction during a tidal wetland restoration at Rush Ranch Open Space Preserve

SUISUN MARSH PROTECTION PLAN OF 1976

"The objectives of the Protection Plan are to preserve and enhance the quality and diversity of the Suisun Marsh aquatic and wildlife habitats and to assure retention of upland areas adjacent to the Marsh in uses compatible with its protection."

View of the Suisun Marsh landscape

©Shannon Skalos

PROTECTION PLAN OVERVIEW

Composed of Four Parts:

I. Introduction

II. Findings and Policies

III. Carrying out the Protection Plan

IV. Plan Maps

View of the Suisun Marsh landscape

©Shannon Skalos

PROTECTION PLAN FINDINGS AND POLICIES

1. Environment
2. Water Supply and Quality
3. Natural Gas Resources
4. Utilities, Facilities, and Transportation
5. Recreation and Access
6. Water-Related Industry
7. Land Use and Marsh Management

A westbound Capitol Corridor train rolls through the marsh at Bahia, CA

QUESTIONS?

Tule Perch from the Long-term Suisun Fish Study

©Denise Colombano

BREAK

View of the Suisun Marsh landscape

©Shannon Skalos

SUISUN MARSH HISTORY: THE LAST 40 YEARS AND THE FUTURE

Native marsh plant, *Grindelia stricta*

©Shannon Skalos

Kayaker in the Suisun Marsh

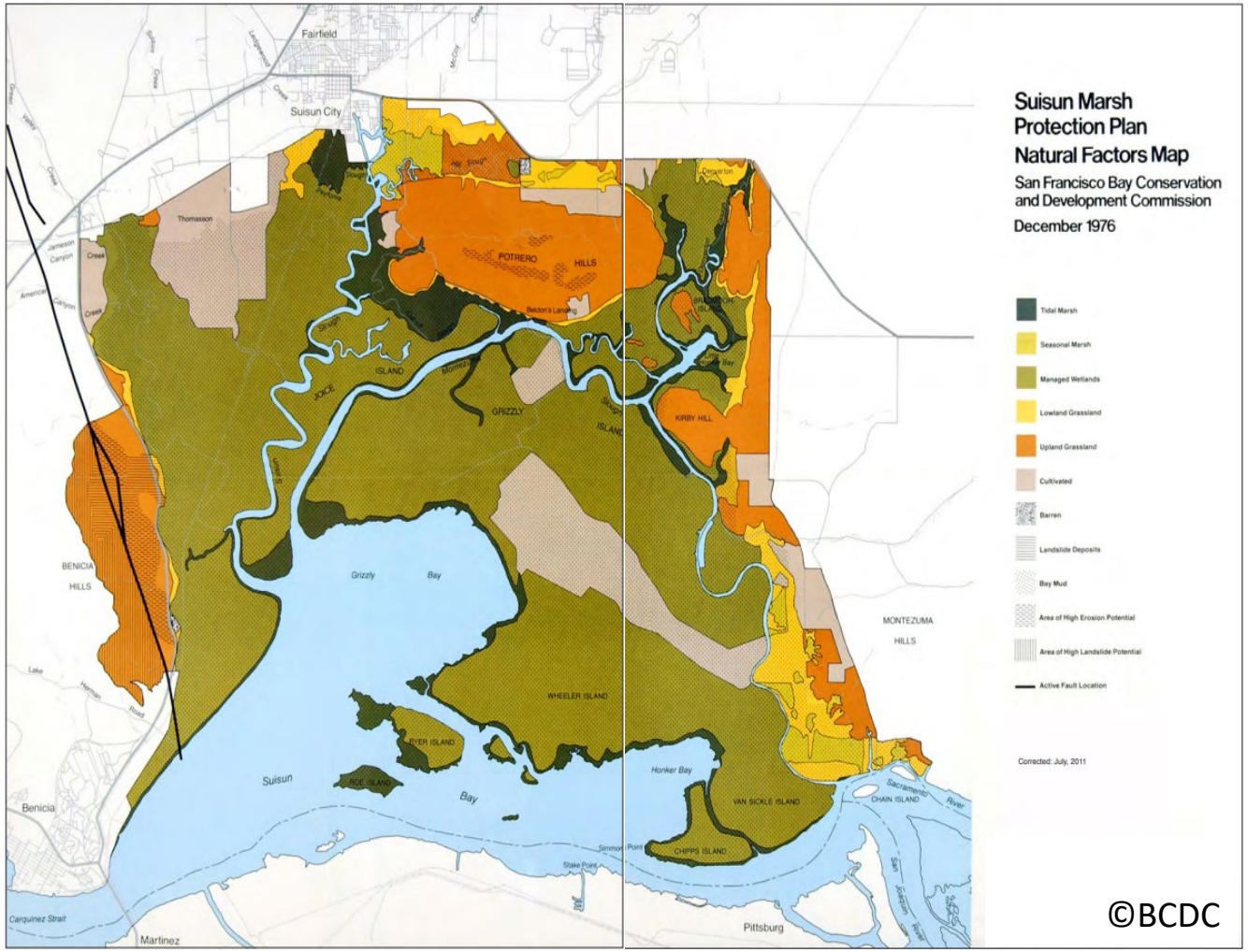
©Flickr User David Hickman

ECOLOGY

Aerial view of Suisun Marsh showing the upland, the tidal channels, and flooded managed wetlands

ECOLOGY

- 200 + plant species
- 180 + bird species
- 45 mammal species
- 15 reptile and amphibian species
- 60 species of butterflies
- 50 + species of fish



Suisun Marsh Protection Plan Natural Factors Map from 1976

ECOLOGICAL CHANGES

Extensive white-top invasion in the tidal marsh at Rush Ranch Open Space Preserve

- Sediment supply from the Delta has decreased
- Water diversions and management plans have changed multiple times
- Extreme drought and extreme rain events are becoming more frequent
- Invasive species pressures continue to be a primary management concern

PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION

Angler holding a striped bass

Hunter and dog with retrieved duck

PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION CHANGES

- Expansion of open space areas and general public access to the marsh
- Waterfowl hunting traditions still strong in Suisun Marsh
- Abundances of some key species have declined, and marsh management practices have changed as a result
- Large decline in native fish populations during the 1980s
- Non-native fish populations have been variable and are predicted to decline

A member of the public hiking and taking nature photos in the Suisun Marsh

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

A rendering the future Pacific Flyway Center in Fairfield

View of Grizzly Island Road

BUILT ENVIRONMENT CHANGES

- Technological advancements put new pressures on the marsh
- Levees are aging and under increasing pressure
- Aging and changing managed wetland infrastructure
- Water-related industrial development
- Salinity control and water diversions

View of the salinity control gates in Suisun Marsh

REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

bcdc

California Water Boards
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARDS

SOLANO COUNTY 1850

CITY OF SUISUN CITY CALIFORNIA

US Army Corps of Engineers®

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES STATE OF CALIFORNIA

FAIRFIELD

CITY OF FAIRFIELD CALIFORNIA

National Marine Fisheries Service
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH & WILDLIFE

SOLANO MOSQUITO ABATEMENT DISTRICT

THE CITY OF BENICIA CALIFORNIA

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

DELTA STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

suisun Resource Conservation District

LAFCO

REGULATORY CHANGES

- Endangered species considerations have shifted as new species are listed
- Suisun Marsh Local Protection Program is established
- Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act created the Delta Stewardship Council and Delta Plan
- Suisun Marsh Habitat Management, Preservation, and Restoration Plan was created
- Tidal wetland restorations targets have been established
- Recent changes to federal practices around the designation of Waters of the US

Endangered Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse

EMERGING ISSUES

- Climate change
- Sea level rise
- Environmental Justice
- Enforcement of existing law and policy
- Cultural resources of the marsh

Wind turbines near the Western Railway Museum

How do we continue to preserve and protect a functional marsh?

SMALL GROUP CONVERSATIONS

- You will have a series of 4 conversations to help answer our strategic question around 3 topic areas + anything we have missed!
- Each conversation will last ~15 minutes
- Table hosts will summarize the conversations of the previous groups so each group can build upon the insights of the previous group

View of the Suisun Marsh landscape

©Shannon Skalos

How do we continue to preserve and protect a functional marsh?

DEBRIEF

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Hunters in Suisun Marsh

©Jacqueline Satter

PROTECTION PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

- Synthesize the outcomes of this workshop
- Scope and create work plan for BCDC staff
- Communicate work plan and policy review approach to stakeholders
- Continue to solicit your feedback

Next stakeholder workshop – Fall 2020!

QUESTIONS?

A very good dog retrieving a bird

©Mike Casazza

THANK YOU!

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https://www.bcdc.ca.gov/plans/Suisun-Marsh-Policy-Review.html