

Date of Hearing: April 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 2216 (Aguiar-Curry) – As Amended April 6, 2026

SUBJECT: Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy

SUMMARY: Renames the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Act to the Valley and Delta Conservancy Act, expands the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy's (Conservancy) geographical jurisdiction, and establishes the Valley Program (Program) under the administration of the Conservancy to support efforts that advance the environmental protection and the economic well-being of Valley residents.

EXISTING LAW, pursuant to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Act (Public Resources Code (PRC) 32300 – 32381):

- 1) Establishes the Conservancy in the Natural Resources Agency as a state agency to work in collaboration and cooperation with local governments and interested parties.
- 2) Requires the Conservancy to act as a primary state agency to implement ecosystem restoration in the Delta.
- 3) Requires the Conservancy to support efforts that advance environmental protection and the economic well-being of Delta residents
- 4) Requires the board of the Conservancy consist of 11 voting members and two nonvoting members, appointed or designated, as specified.
- 5) Requires 10 liaison advisers to serve in an advisory, nonvoting capacity.
- 6) Requires the board to establish and maintain a headquarters office within the Delta.
- 7) Requires the board to hold its regular meetings within the Delta or the City of Rio Vista.
- 8) Provides that the jurisdiction and activities of the Conservancy are limited to the Delta and Suisun Marsh, except for when the Conservancy makes all of the following findings to take or fund an action outside the Delta and Suisun Marsh:
 - a) The project implements the ecosystem goals of the Delta Plan;
 - b) The project is consistent with the requirements of any applicable state and federal permits;
 - c) The conservancy has given notice to and reviewed any comments received from affected local jurisdictions and the Delta Protection Commission;
 - d) The conservancy has given notice to and reviewed any comments received from any state conservancy where the project is located; and,
 - e) The project will provide significant benefits to the Delta.

- 9) Establishes other powers, duties, and limitations.

THIS BILL:

- 1) Renames the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Act to the Valley and Delta Conservancy Act.
- 2) Make changes to the codified findings and declarations.
- 3) Renames the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy to the Valley and Delta Conservancy.
- 4) Increases the number of liaison advisers from 10 to 12 to include a designee of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and a designee of the San Joaquin River Conservancy.
- 5) Requires the board to maintain a headquarters office, and authorizes the opening of satellite offices, within the areas under the Conservancy's jurisdiction or the counties that those areas are within, or in the City of Sacramento, in the number and location applicable to the Conservancy's work under the direction of the board to the extent that funding is available.
- 6) Requires the board to hold its regular meetings within areas under the Conservancy's jurisdiction and rotate the location of the meetings among the different counties within those areas.
- 7) Provides that funds can only be allocated for activities in the Valley if there is an appropriation by the Legislature for that purpose. Provides that funds that have already been appropriated to the Conservancy for activities in the Delta or the Suisun Marsh shall be used in compliance with the conditions of those appropriations and for activities only in those areas.
- 8) Updates the findings the Conservancy must make in order to take action outside of its jurisdiction in furtherance of the Conservancy's mission and role in implementing the Delta Plan and other relevant plans within the areas under the Conservancy's jurisdiction.
- 9) Establishes the Program under the administration of the Conservancy to support efforts that advance the environmental protection and the economic well-being of Valley residents. Requires the Program to support Conservancy activities in the Valley, which may include, but are not limited to, activities to do any of the following:
 - a) Protect, enhance, and restore ecosystem function and habitat;
 - b) Support on-farm activities that contribute to wildlife habitat and provide multiple conservation benefits;
 - c) Protect and preserve Valley agriculture and natural and working lands;
 - d) Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation in the Valley;
 - e) Promote Valley legacy communities and economic vitality;

- f) Advance workforce development;
 - g) Increase the resilience of the Valley to the effects of climate change and natural disasters such as floods, droughts, wildfires, and earthquakes;
 - h) Protect and improve water quality;
 - i) Assist the regional economy;
 - j) Identify priority projects and initiatives for which funding is needed;
 - k) Protect, conserve, and restore the region's physical, agricultural, cultural, historical, and living resources;
 - l) Assist local entities in the implementation of their habitat conservation plans and natural community conservation plans; and,
 - m) Promote environmental education.
- 10) Authorizes the Conservancy to engage in partnerships with tribal organizations.
- 11) Requires the Conservancy, when necessary and appropriate, to cooperate and consult with a resource conservation district that owns or operates facilities, including lands appurtenant to those facilities, where a grant is proposed to be expended or an interest in land is proposed to be acquire.
- 12) Authorizes the Conservancy to pay grantees at their full federally allocated cost allocation rate or other certified cost allocation rate when there is no conflict with any applicable laws.
- 13) Authorizes the Conservancy to make advance payments in accordance with policy set by the board to ensure that moneys are used properly and in accordance with grant agreement.
- 14) Authorizes the Conservancy to fund or award grants for plans and feasibility studies consistent with its strategic plan or the Delta Plan or other relevant plans within the areas under the Conservancy's jurisdiction.
- 15) Authorizes the Conservancy to provide grants and loans to tribal organizations.
- 16) For purposes of the Act, defines "other relevant plans" include, but not be limited to the Delta Protection Commission's Land Use and Resource Management Plan; the Delta Protection Commission's Economic Sustainability Plan for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta; the Delta Stewardship Council's Delta Adapts: Creating a Climate Resilient Future Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Climate Change Adaptation Plan; the Delta Stewardship Council's Delta Levees Investment Strategy; the Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy; California's Nature-Based Solutions Climate Targets; any community action plans for legacy communities or relevant local plans; and, updates and plan transitions for all of the plans listed above.

17) Makes technical, nonsubstantive changes to current law.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

1) **Author's statement:**

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is a uniquely biodiverse region that provides habitat for over 750 species, supplies drinking water for 27 million Californians, and contains more than 6 million acres of prime agricultural land. Since its creation in 2010, the Delta Conservancy has awarded more than \$130 million in state and federal funding for critical projects that provide tangible benefits to all Californians. The Delta Conservancy has helped fund the wetland rehabilitation, carbon capture, and the expansion of habitat-friendly agriculture, and it plays a key role in protecting the Delta ecosystem and its vibrant economy. This bill expands the Delta Conservancy's jurisdiction to help facilitate projects that benefit the Delta. By incorporating the entirety of Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo counties into the covered territory, this bill will create a more comprehensive, watershed-focused approach to conservation.

- 2) **Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.** The Delta encapsulates a 1,300 square mile area where the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers converge just southwest of the state capitol in Sacramento to form a 700,000-acre estuary – the largest estuary on the west coast of the Americas.

The Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta supplies clean drinking water to 25 million Californians and is home to 750 distinct species of plants and animals, including waterfowl and sandhill cranes, Chinook salmon, Central Valley steelhead, and green sturgeon.

Pollution, invasive species, and destruction of most of the area's wetland and river habitat have put one of the world's largest water-delivery systems at high risk. Water-supply operations have even reversed the direction of rivers flowing out of the Delta, causing several native species to be on the verge of extinction.

The Conservancy was created to support efforts that advance both environmental protection and the economic well-being of Delta residents in a complementary manner.

- 3) **Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy.** The Conservancy was created by the Legislature in 2009 as a primary state agency in the implementation of ecosystem restoration in the Delta and collaborates and cooperates with local communities and other parties to preserve, protect, and restore the natural resources, economy, and agriculture of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun Marsh.

The Conservancy's *2025 Annual Report* (January 2026) notes that statewide strategies, including Delta Adapts and California's Nature-Based Solutions Climate Targets, recognize the significance of Delta subsidence and associated greenhouse gas emissions to California climate mitigation goals. In accordance with those strategies, the Conservancy set targets, including re-wetting 50,000 acres of deeply subsided, highly organic soils in the Delta by 2045.

- 4) **Expansion.** This bill renames the Conservancy the Valley and Delta Conservancy and expands the jurisdiction to reflect the evolving challenges facing the region, such as land fallowing, water scarcity, invasive species, destruction of habitat, and fire risks, and the state’s evolving environmental protection goals, including 30x30 goals, nature-based climate solutions, and Outdoors for All.

The Valley is surrounded by densely populated urban areas providing substantial opportunities for recreation, such as boating, camping, kayaking, fishing, hiking, birding, and hunting. The Trust for Public Land writes in support of the bill that expanding the Conservancy to include lands within Yolo, Sacramento, Solano, and San Joaquin Counties would help to facilitate increases access to nature for thousands of Californians, including underserved communities.

- 5) **State funding.** The Conservancy relies on state bond funding to support its work. Given the uncertainty of funding and that the funding in the Climate Bond is small compared to the Delta’s needs, staff will pursue additional funding for Delta work. In 2025, the Conservancy continued to apply for grants, conduct outreach to other state agencies that may contract with the Conservancy, and build efficiencies into the system.

The Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024, approved by the voters as Proposition 4 in November 2024, authorizes \$10 billion in general obligation bonds to finance various climate resiliency projects, and includes a \$29 million line-item appropriation for the Conservancy (PRC 93020 (4)).

To prevent any challenges with the Proposition 4 allocation or other budget appropriations for the current Conservancy, the bill provides that funds can only be allocated for activities in the Valley if there is an appropriation by the Legislature for that purpose. Funds that have already been appropriated to the current Conservancy for activities in the Delta or the Suisun Marsh are required to be used in compliance with the conditions of those appropriations and for activities only in those areas.

- 6) **Double referral.** This bill was heard in the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee on March 24 and approved 11-1.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Audubon California
 California Waterfowl
 County of Yolo
 Defenders of Wildlife
 Grassland Water District
 PAT Hume, Sacramento County Supervisor, District 5
 Suisun Resource Conservation District
 The Nature Conservancy
 Trust for Public Land

Opposition

None on file

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