

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

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

Policy Committee:	Water, Parks and Wildlife	Vote:	11 - 1
	Natural Resources		14 - 0

Urgency: No                      State Mandated Local Program: No                      Reimbursable: >

**SUMMARY:**

This bill renames the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy (Delta Conservancy) the Valley and Delta Conservancy and extends the jurisdiction of the Valley and Delta Conservancy.

Specifically, this bill, among other things:

- 1) Renames the Delta Conservancy the Valley and Delta Conservancy, defines “Valley” as the lands within the Counties of Yolo, Sacramento, Solano, and San Joaquin that are outside the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta), and makes numerous conforming changes.
- 2) Increases the number of nonvoting liaison advisors to the governing board of the Valley and Delta Conservancy from ten to twelve by adding designees of the San Joaquin River Conservancy and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.
- 3) Authorizes the Valley and Delta Conservancy to open satellite offices within the areas under the conservancy’s jurisdiction or the counties 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 governing board and to the extent funding is available.
- 4) Requires the governing board’s meetings within the areas under the Valley and Delta Conservancy’s jurisdiction to rotate the location of the meetings among the different counties within those areas.
- 5) Requires that funds be allocated only for activities in the Valley if there is an appropriation by the Legislature for that purpose and that funding already appropriated to the Valley and Delta Conservancy for activities in the Delta or the Suisun Marsh be used in compliance with the conditions of those appropriations and for activities only in those areas.
- 6) Establishes the Valley Program under the administration of the Valley and Delta Conservancy to support efforts that advance the environmental protection and economic well-being of Valley residents and requires the Valley Program to support conservancy activities in the Valley, as specified, and provides examples of these activities: supporting on-farm activities that contribute to wildlife habitat and provide multiple conservation benefits, advancing workforce development, and assisting local entities in the implementation of their habitat conservation plans and natural community conservation plans.

- 7) Authorizes the Valley and Delta Conservancy to engage in partnerships with and provide grants and loans to tribal organizations.
- 8) Authorizes the Valley and Delta 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, and authorizes the Valley and Delta Conservancy to make advance payments on grants, as specified.
- 9) Requires the Valley and Delta Conservancy to cooperate and consult as necessary or appropriate with a resource conservation district that owns or operates facilities, as specified.
- 10) Authorizes the Valley and Delta Conservancy to fund or award grants for plans and feasibility studies consistent with its strategic plan, the Delta Plan, or other relevant plans within the areas under the Valley and Delta Conservancy's jurisdiction.
- 11) Requires the governing board of the Valley and Delta Conservancy to prepare, adopt, and update as necessary a strategic plan to achieve the goals of the conservancy.
- 12) Removes the finding that the Valley and Delta Conservancy may facilitate take protection and safe harbor agreements under the federal Endangered Species Act and the California Endangered Species Act for adjacent landowners and local public agencies.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) Ongoing annual cost pressure of an unknown amount, possibly in the hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars (General Fund, special fund, or future bond funds) to fund projects in the expanded jurisdiction of the Valley and Delta Conservancy. While the Proposition 4 climate bond allocates \$29 million to the Delta Conservancy, these dollars are restricted to the existing footprint of the Delta Conservancy.

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year (FY) and ongoing.

- 2) The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) notes initial boundary expansion, outreach, and planning will likely result in a negligible increase in staff workload. CNRA expects future funding sources (most likely bond funds) to include a set-aside for agency implementation and staffing costs to administer projects in the expanded area, consistent with previous natural resource bonds.

For context, since its creation in 2010, the Delta Conservancy has awarded over \$130 million in state and federal funding for more than 140 projects that improve recreation opportunities, drive tourism, fund locally supported restoration and climate resilience projects, and support Delta agriculture. The annual operating budget for the Delta Conservancy is approximately \$2.6 million. This funds 14 positions (12 of which are filled and two of which are vacant).

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

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) **Background. *The Legal Delta.*** The “legal Delta,” defined in Water Code § 12220, covers approximately 500,000 acres of natural lands, working lands, and waterways in the Counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo. The Delta Conservancy's jurisdiction is currently limited to the legal Delta and the Suisun Marsh, approximately 85,000 acres of tidal marsh, managed wetlands, and waterways in Solano County.

***Delta as Place.*** In addition to protecting the Delta's critical role in ensuring reliable water supply for California, the Delta Protection Act establishes the “coequal goal” of protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem, to be achieved in a manner that protects and enhances the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place. The Delta is a complex and ecologically important region, home to nearly 750,000 people, with 350,000 acres of land in active production, three state park system units, and, especially at the edges of the Delta, increasingly dense residential and commercial developments. The Delta is also home to hundreds of species of native plants and animals and forms a key component of the Pacific Flyway migratory bird corridor.

***The Valley and Delta.*** Communities beyond the boundaries of the legal Delta face many of the same challenges as Delta residents, without the support of a state conservancy. Wildfire hazards, habitat loss, and impacts to environmental justice communities affect the areas surrounding the Delta, which are linked both culturally and geo-physically to the Delta. When state and federal funding is routed through conservancies, the legal boundary line could be the difference between a community having access to resources or not. Additionally, partnerships with the peripheral urban areas could increase outdoor access within the Valley and Delta and contribute to economic sustainability in the region.

***Delta Conservancy Funding.*** Previous funding sources for the Delta Conservancy include \$50 million in Proposition 1, \$12 million in Proposition 68, \$36 million in the Budget Act of 2022 (for projects that support nature-based solutions), approximately \$11 million in the Budget Acts of 2021 and 2022 (for projects that support climate resilience, community access, and natural resource protection activities that benefit the Delta), \$20 million in emergency drought funding through the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to run a Delta Drought Response Pilot Program, and approximately \$6 million in several smaller federal grants over the years. These funds are almost entirely obligated. As noted earlier, Proposition 4 allocates \$29 to the Delta Conservancy.

Writing in support, a coalition of conservation organizations argues the expansion of the Delta Conservancy to all the counties it already serves has local support and would cover important areas of the state that are not currently covered by a conservancy. The coalition

writes: “Some of these areas have significant wildfire risk and have not had access to the recent funding packages for conservancy wildfire resilience projects.”

- 3) **Related Legislation.** SB 872 (McNerney) of the current legislative session establishes the Delta Levees and Canal Subsidence Fund and, upon appropriation, requires CNRA to allocate from the fund, through FY 2046-47, \$150 million annually to DWR for supporting capital improvements to restore the original design water conveyance capacity for state water conveyance systems impacted by land subsidence, and \$150 million annually to the Delta Conservancy for projects in the Delta to improve existing levees. SB 872 is pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee.
- 4) **Prior Legislation.** SB 1122 (Allen), Chapter 718, Statutes of 2022, extended the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy to include the Dominguez Channel watershed and Santa Catalina Island.

SB 1052 (Kamlager), Chapter 714, Statutes of 2022, renamed the Baldwin Hills Conservancy the Baldwin Hills and Urban Watersheds Conservancy, extended the conservancy to include the Southern Ballona Creek Watershed and the Upper Dominguez Channel, and required the conservancy to develop and adopt a watershed and open-space plan.

SB 208 (Dahle), Chapter 182, Statutes of 2021, extended the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to include sections of the Pit, Trinity, Upper Sacramento, and McCloud watersheds.

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