

**DRAFT**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**AGRICULTURAL LAND STEWARDSHIP STRATEGIES**

**DISCUSSION PAPER**

**MAINTAINING DELTA AGRICULTURE**

**October 2013**



For web version of the paper, see <https://agriculturallandstewardship.water.ca.gov>

## DRAFT Executive Summary

### AGRICULTURAL LAND STEWARDSHIP STRATEGIES

#### DISCUSSION PAPER

##### MAINTAINING DELTA AGRICULTURE

Even with implementation of the mitigation measures and commitments proposed in the Spring 2013 Consultant Administrative Draft Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) and Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS), there will still be impacts to Delta agriculture. This paper sets forth a menu of potential agricultural land stewardship strategies that can be considered by decision makers when discussing appropriate mitigation measures or enhancements that support the Delta as a place. The approach outlined in this document does not try to distinguish environmental from economic impacts.

The potential strategies listed in [Table ES-1](#) and discussed in Chapter 1 were developed following conversations with Delta and other interests. At this time, there is no agreement that any potential strategy be pursued as a result of this paper. The primary purpose of the paper is to get additional feedback from Delta interests with regard to whether these are strategies they would like to see implemented, whether they are adequately described and whether there are additional strategies that should be included. Some of the potential strategies are still in development.

People wanting to review the documents can go to <https://agriculturallandstewardship.water.ca.gov> where they can download copies and complete a Feedback Form on line. Comments received will be considered in subsequent versions of the strategy paper and be treated as public records. Requests to meet to discuss issues raised by the paper should be sent to:

[DWRAgriculturalStewardshipInfo@water.ca.gov](mailto:DWRAgriculturalStewardshipInfo@water.ca.gov)

It is expected that implementation of the strategies would be voluntary on the part of the landowner, farmer and local government; that it would not conflict with the implementation of ongoing ecosystem restoration or BDCP conservation measures; and that it would be consistent with state wide and regional policies.

This paper assumes that, with the exception of current estimates for BDCP project and mitigation costs, additional funding will be necessary to implement any one of the strategies. Such funding could be part of a bond program, cap and trade revenues, greenhouse gas emission reduction programs or other sources still to be determined. There are a number of institutional structures that could be used or built upon to distribute funds that might be developed.

Implementation of a strategy could be carried out with regard to one or more of three different kinds of activities. Chapter 2 provides more discussion on implementation and funding. See the following link for Chapter 2: <https://agriculturallandstewardship.water.ca.gov/web/guest/chapter-2-implementation-funding>.

- BDCP planning to include agricultural considerations
- An Optional Agricultural Land Stewardship Approach for a CEQA/NEPA mitigation package for BDCP
- Enhancements for the Delta as a place, consistent with the Delta Plan.

Potential strategies are organized in four categories:

- Strategies to help maintain farming in the Delta
- Strategies that provide incentives for conservation on farmland
- Strategies to manage land for purposes other than conventional crop production
- Strategies that provide for economic development and other benefits

The discussion of each strategy covers its topics in the following order:

- Description of the strategy
- Related policies and program
- Issues
- BDCP and EIR/EIS
- Opportunities and potential partners

# Table ES-1 Tool Box of Potential Agricultural Land Stewardship Strategies

## Framework for Agricultural Land Stewardship Planning

**A. Incorporate Tool Box of ALS Strategies into planning processes**

**B. Develop Agricultural Land Stewardship Plans for projects**

### Group A: Potential strategies to help maintain farming in the

**Strategy 1:** Improve flood management

**Strategy 1a:** Enhance programs that protect agriculture from flood damage

**Strategy 1b:** Help farmers comply with FEMA flood insurance regulations

**Strategy 1c:** Help with local flood response efforts (under development)

**Strategy 2:** Maintain or improve on-farm agricultural productivity, including assisting with water quality regulatory compliance

**Strategy 3:** Project Planning (under Development)

**Strategy 3a:** Early project planning to avoid use of agricultural land

**Strategy 3b:** Involve farmers and local community in project planning

**Strategy 3c:** Determine mitigation or assistance, as appropriate for environmental and social/economic impacts of projects

**Strategy 4:** Empty

**Strategy 5:** Empty

**Strategy 6:** Control terrestrial weeds

**Strategy 6a:** Reinvigorate County Weed Management Areas

**Strategy 6b:** Prioritize invasive weeds for area-wide control

**Strategy 6c:** Encourage use of weed-free construction materials

**Strategy 7:** Reduce conflict between agriculture and nearby habitat lands by adopting a “good neighbor” policy

**Strategy 8:** Work with other interests to explore the value of reinstating state funding of California Land Conservation Act subventions

**Strategy 9:** Cooperate with counties

**Strategy 9a:** Explore relationship between project and county planning activities (under development)

**Strategy 9b:** Work with counties to expand California Land Conservation Act authorized uses to include open space/habitat lands in California Land Conservation Act Preserves

**Strategy 9c:** Investigate options for in lieu tax revenue for counties and payments for special districts

**Strategy 10:** Empty

**Strategy 11:** Provide for agricultural conservation easements

**Group B: Potential strategies that provide incentives for conservation on farmland**

**Strategy 12:** Partner with others to maintain and enhance environmental quality on farmland

**Strategy 13:** Compensate farmers to manage agricultural land as habitat for wildlife

**Strategy 14:** Provide incentives for farmers to take part in a market based conservation program

**Group C: Potential strategies to manage land for purposes other than conventional crop production**

**Strategy 15:** Provide incentives to stabilize or reverse land subsidence on Delta islands

**Strategy 16:** Assist landowners to produce and sell greenhouse gas offset credits in the AB 32 Cap-and-Trade program

**Strategy 17:** Compensate farmers to manage habitat lands

**Strategy 18:** Designate carbon sequestration and subsidence reversal crops as agricultural production for regulatory and incentive programs (under development)

**Group D: Potential strategies that focus on economic development and other benefits**

**Strategy 19:** Develop area-wide economic and land use studies

**Strategy 19a:** Develop an historic and current land use study

**Strategy 19b:** Develop an economic study of agricultural activity and related infrastructure

**Strategy 19c:** Develop a plan for protection and restoration of habitat areas that takes into consideration vitality of agricultural economy (under development)

**Strategy 20:** Promote economic development

**Strategy 21:** Improve transportation infrastructure

**Strategy 22:** Assist farmers who want to manage their land to incorporate recreation and tourism

**Strategy 23:** Assist farmers in working with governmental agencies

**Strategy 23a:** Project proponents could establish a public advisor position to serve as an information source for those wanting to more about a proposed project (under development)

**Strategy 23b:** Farmbudsman – Help farmers navigate regulatory requirements for farm activities.

**Strategy 23c:** Work with others to better align regulatory processes to expedite wildlife friendly agriculture

**Strategy 24:** Work with others to identify bond or other funding to help sustain vital economies (under development)

**Strategy 25:** Work with others to develop a fund (or funds) and governance system to allocate money designated for mitigation of impacts to agriculture and/or for sustaining a vital economies (under development)