

# INTRODUCTION

## I.1 THE DELTA

### I.1.1. Description of the Delta

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is a geographically unique inland delta that has been shaped by a long cultural history. The Delta is a vital link in the state's water system, spanning six counties in northern California at the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers. The Delta contains about 1,100 miles of rivers and sloughs. These waterways provide habitat for many aquatic species, and the uplands provide year-round and seasonal habitat for amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds, including several rare and endangered species. Agriculture is a dominant land use in the Delta, in addition to many popular recreational activities including fishing, boating, hunting, wildlife viewing, water-skiing, swimming, hiking, and biking.

Located in southwesterly Sacramento County, the Delta Community consists of 162 square miles of waterways and fertile land. The area is bounded by the Sacramento City limits on the north, the I-5 freeway on the east, and the County line to the south and west. Several small towns are located within the legally defined Delta. These towns, also referred to as "legacy" communities, include: Freeport, Hood, Courtland, Locke, Ryde and Walnut Grove. Isleton, an incorporated city, is situated in the vicinity as well, but with its own land use rules and regulations.

Federal, state, and local governments have long recognized the uniqueness and importance of the Delta. However, in recent years the need for more robust flood protection, declining health of the Delta's ecosystem and the need to protect and improve the Delta's ability to convey water have moved to the forefront. As a result, a host of government agencies have adopted laws and formed regulatory structures intended to help address the various issues facing the Delta. However, this multi-layer regulatory setting has become increasingly more complex, especially as regulatory documents affecting land use, are being adopted and amended. The County recognizes that this regulatory structure makes it difficult for project applicants and County staff to navigate development projects (e.g., building permits, improvement plans,



Delta Aerial View



Walnut Grove Bridge  
Crossing Sacramento River



Town of Locke

grading plans, planning entitlements) through the County's project review processes.

## **I.2 APPLICANT'S GUIDE FOR PROJECTS IN THE DELTA**

### **I.2.1. Purpose**

The Applicant's Guide for Projects in the Delta will help Delta project applicants in unincorporated Sacramento County better understand the applicable requirements and regulatory process(es), and in the end attain the necessary permits for their project. These include building permits, improvement plans, grading permits, final maps and planning entitlements. The emphasis of this Guide is permitting requirements and processes at the local level. Permitting requirements at the State and Federal level for projects at or near levees are also provided by this Guide. The Guide provides descriptions and links that will help prospective applicants prepare plans that meet requirements of applicable regulations and permitting processes. However, more complex projects may require consultation with a professional engineer, architect and/or planner.

This Guide is also intended to assist County staff in reviewing and processing development applications, particularly those that need to be referred to the two State agencies that review projects in the Delta – the Delta Protection Commission (DPC) and the Delta Stewardship Council (DSC).

### **I.2.2. Caveats**

The Delta has long been subject to multiple layers of local, State and federal regulations. Therefore, this Guide is not intended to be all inclusive in that it does not include descriptions of each and every local, State and federal policy document or ordinance that may apply to a prospective development project. The user is encouraged to check the latest permit requirements and regulations at the State and Federal levels. However, because the Delta's islands/tracts are protected from flooding by a vast system of levees, the Guide does include information and links related to State and Federal flood control/management requirements for projects on or near levees.

### **I.2.3. Organization**

The organization of the Guide is as follows:

- Chapter 1: A list of typical projects is provided - from a room addition to an entire subdivision and the permits or entitlements that will be required. This chapter will assist a project applicant to determine which chapters in this Guide are applicable to the project.
- Chapter 2: At a minimum, most development projects will require building permits. As a result first chapter on permits will cover the building permit process.
- Chapter 3: Improvement plans, grading permits and final recorded maps, which are required for many development projects will be covered in this chapter.
- Chapters 4 and 5: These chapters will provide information on planning development standards and entitlement processes. Chapter 5 focuses on the Courtland, Locke, Lower Andrus Island and Walnut Grove Special Planning Area (SPA) Ordinances.
- Chapter 6: Delta Protection Commission and Delta Stewardship Council review processes are covered in this chapter. These processes may be required to occur concurrently with planning entitlement processes (Chapter 4).

- Chapter 7: For projects on or near levees, Encroachment Permits from the Central Valley Flood Protection Board and Section 404 or Section 10 Permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may need to be attained.

Paragraphs that are italicized contain helpful hints that will assist the applicant to successfully attain permits for his or her project. The following **Exhibit I.1** illustrates the relationships between all the Processes described in this Guide.

Exhibit I.1

# Project Review Process for Delta Projects

