



Suisun Resource Conservation District

2021 Annual Report

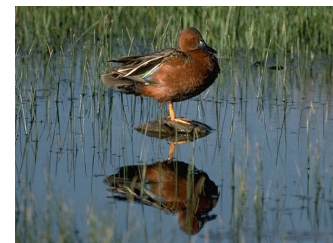


Introduction

As a result of the collapse of agriculture and the Great Dust Bowl in 1938, the California Legislature passed laws authorizing the creation of California's Soil Conservation Districts. In 1971, all of California's 113 Soil Conservation Districts that help manage and protect public land became Resource Conservation Districts. California's Resource Conservation Districts are governed under Division 9 of the Public Resource Code and are empowered to coordinate resource management efforts for purposes of watershed restoration and enhancement, runoff control, soil erosion prevention, water quality protection, distribution of water, improve land capabilities, and the facilitation of resource management efforts for watershed restoration and enhancement.

The Suisun Soil Conservation District was created in 1963 which later became the Suisun Resource Conservation District (SRCD). In 1974, the Nejedly-Bagley-Z'berg Suisun Marsh Preservation Act was passed defining SRCD boundaries and requiring the formal establishment of policies, regulations, and local protection programs for the Suisun Marsh.

The California Legislature enacted the Suisun Marsh Preservation Act in 1977 which established new land use protections under the 1976 Suisun Marsh Protection Plan and empowered SRCD with the "...primary local responsibility for regulating and improving water management practices on privately owned lands within the primary management area of the Suisun Marsh". Additionally, SRCD was given the authority to issue regulations requiring compliance with any water management plan or program for privately owned lands within the primary management area of the marsh.



Vision and Mission

Our Vision

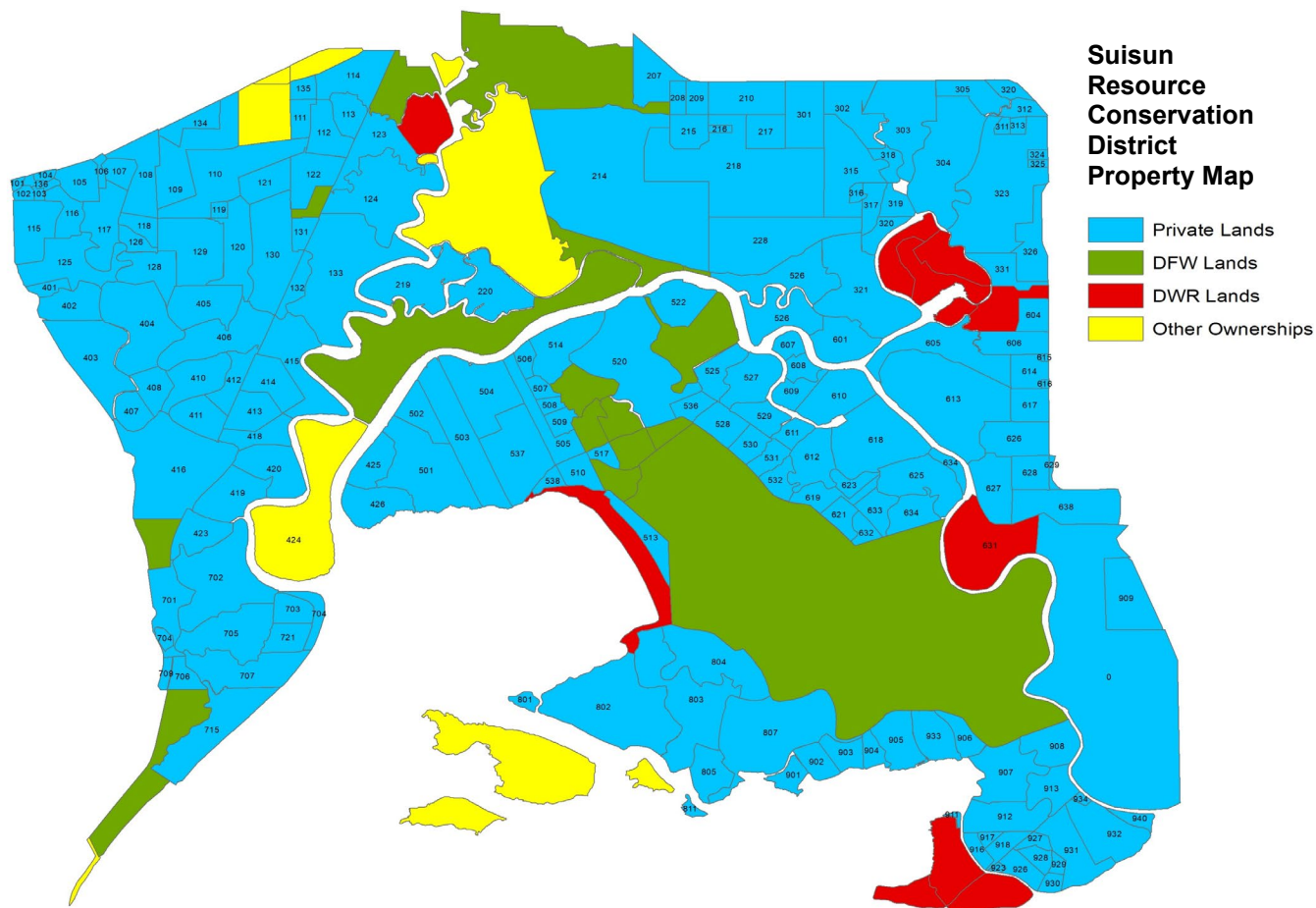
Improve programs and services to provide the Suisun Marsh landowners technical assistance in environmental permitting, habitat management, water control, and funding to ensure the wetland and wildlife values of the Suisun Marsh are sustained and enhanced.

Our Mission

The Suisun Resource Conservation District works collaboratively with private landowners, local, State, and Federal agencies and conservation organizations to meet the environmental and conservation needs of the Suisun Marsh, Solano County, and the San Francisco Bay-Delta of California for future generations. SRCD's historic goal has been to achieve a water supply of sufficient quality so that preferred wetland habitat conditions and wildlife values can be retained through appropriate management practices. SRCD seeks to implement existing programs and develop new efforts aimed at protecting and enhancing the Suisun Marsh wetland and wildlife resources, and support waterfowl hunting heritage.

Scope and Responsibilities

Today, SRCD provides the landowners with technical assistance in environmental permitting, water control, habitat management, invasive species control, competitive grants, and cost share grant programs to ensure the wetland and wildlife values of the Suisun Marsh are sustained and enhanced. SRCD also coordinates with numerous government agencies and conservation partners to represent landowner interests and concerns in the preservation of the Suisun Marsh wetland and wildlife resources. This annual report covers the period from January through December of 2021.



Staff Contacts and Organization Chart

SRCD Main Office:

Steven Chappell	Executive Director	Ext. 4	(707) 425-9302
John Takekawa	Operations Manager	Ext. 2	(707) 631-8634 - cell
Kelli Perez	Office Supervisor	Ext. 6	(707) 631-1402 - cell
Jesirae Collins	Biologist		(707) 631-7002 - cell
Jason Hagani	Analyst Biologist		(707) 631-4078 - cell
Mark Mouton	Caretaker, Lower Joice Island		(707) 631-3442 - cell
			(707) 631-1857 - cell

Water Manager's Office:

Phelan McKinney	Biologist/Water Manager	Ext. 300	(707) 426-2431
Jeff Taylor	Biologist/Water Manager	Ext. 301	(707) 631-0819 - cell
Tim Edmunds	Biologist/Water Manager	Ext. 302	(707) 639-6690 - cell
			(707) 639-6689 - cell

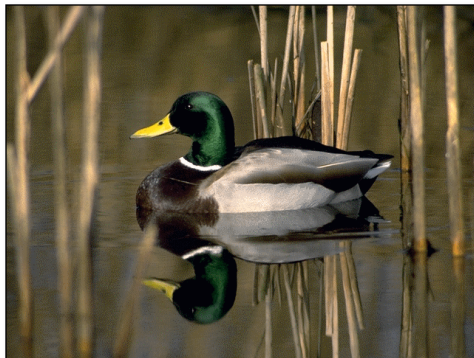
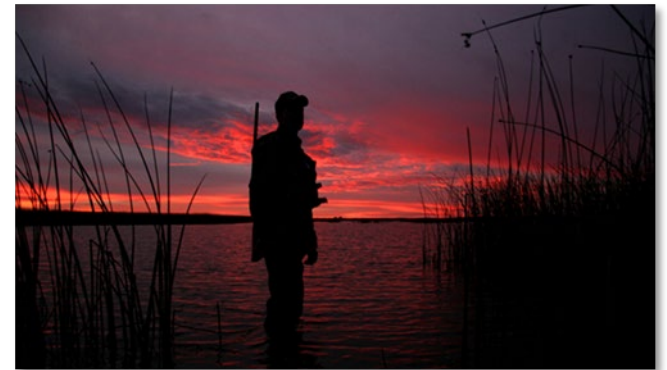


Board of Directors and Associate Directors

The Board of Directors is the governing body of SRCD and is comprised of five unpaid members appointed to 4-year terms. SRCD's Board of Directors meetings are open to the public. They are held at 2 PM on the second Wednesday of each month at the Solano County Supervisors Chambers - 675 Texas Street Fairfield, CA 94533.

SRCD Board of Directors

Tony Vaccarella	President	(650) 365-1642
Terry Connolly	Finance Committee	(707) 864-1105
Arnold Lenk	Agency Relations Committee	(925) 284-3100
Jim Waters	Legal Committee	(510) 409-3864
Mike Lewis	Personnel Committee	(707) 224-3824



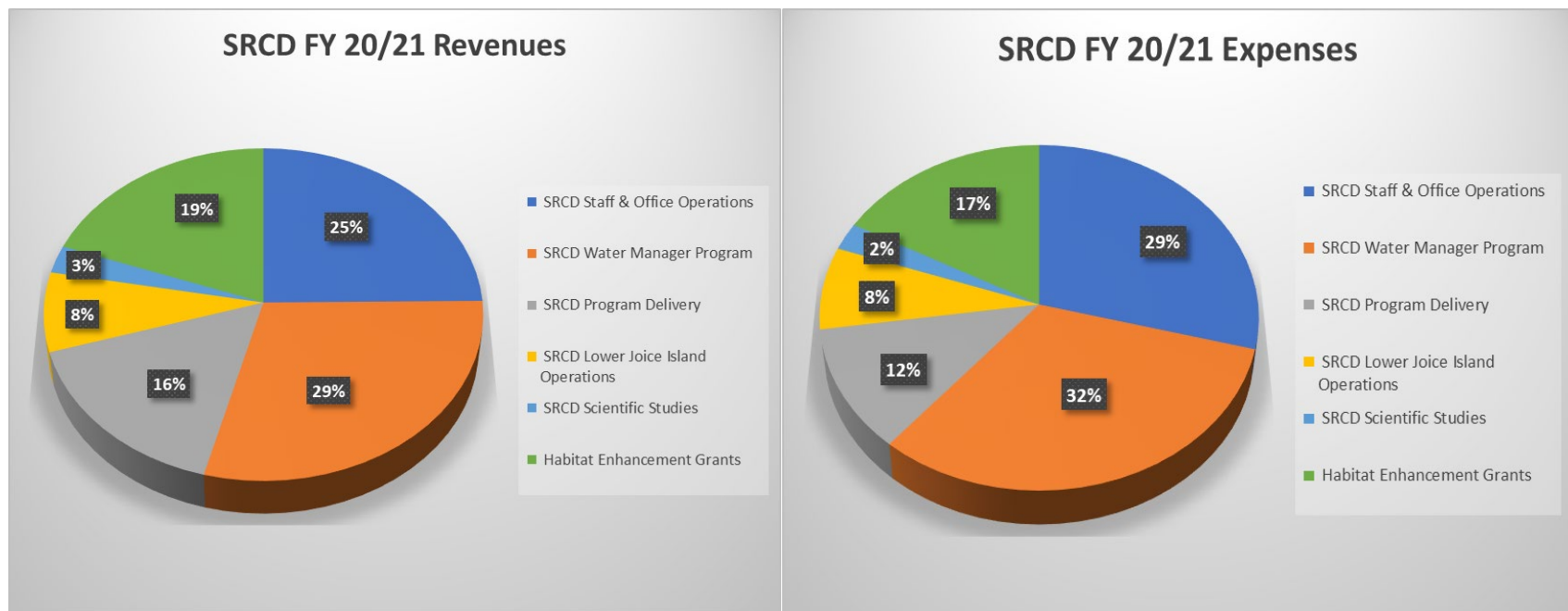
SRCD Associate Directors

Dennis Becker
Kurt Black
H. Kent Hansen
J. Lalo Kwiat
Dan Lehman
Steve Roerden

Financial Summary

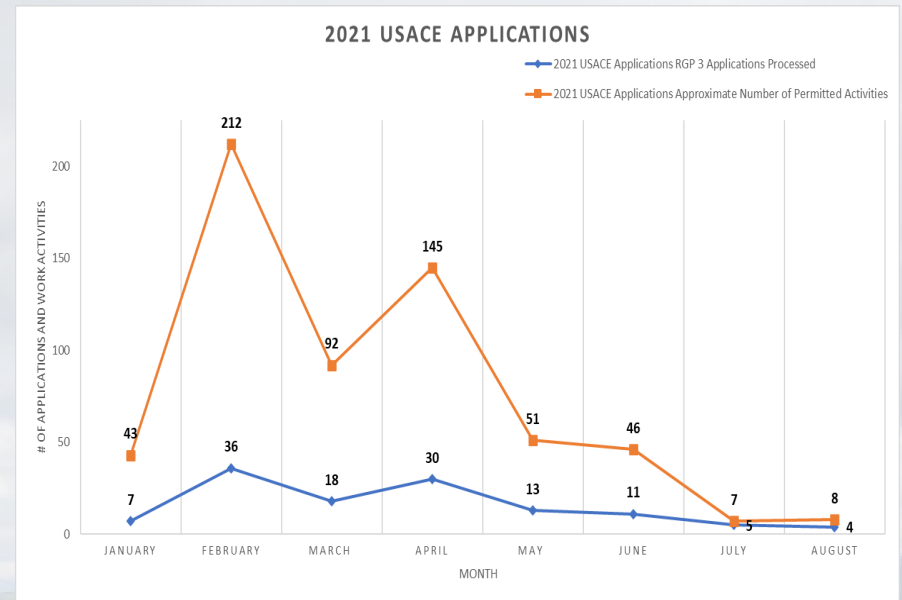
SRCD is supported by a diversity of funding sources that enables SRCD to fulfill our mission and provide services to the Suisun Marsh landowners. Each year, SRCD secures local, state, and federal funds through contracts, agreements, and grant awards to support the delivery of SRCD Programs to the landowners. SRCD's fiscal year is July 1st to June 30th.

SRCD Latest Audited Financials - Fiscal Year 2020/2021



Habitat Management and Technical Assistance

The wetland and wildlife resources of the Suisun Marsh are protected and regulated by a myriad of local, state and federal laws, policies, and regulations. SRCD has held and administered the U. S. Army Corps of Engineer (USACE) Regional General Permit 3 (RGP 3) since 1977 to support the Suisun Marsh landowners' continued operations, maintenance, and enhancement of the managed wetlands. The RGP 3 provides a streamlined permitting procedure for Suisun Marsh landowners, allowing ongoing operations and maintenance of managed wetland infrastructure, water conveyance and control facilities, and levee systems. Under the RGP 3, SRCD is responsible for providing required reports to agencies and guidance to landowners. The landowners are responsible for ensuring all work that they (or their contractors undertake) is in accordance with the terms and conditions of the RGP 3 and companion environmental documents.



In 2014, SRCD obtained the USACE Letter of Permission (LOP) Dredging Permit for Suisun Marsh Exterior Levee Maintenance Activities. The LOP is a 10-year permit allowing 100,000 cubic yards/year of dredging for Suisun Marsh exterior levee maintenance.

In 2014, the 30-year Suisun Marsh Habitat Management, Preservation, and Restoration Plan (SMP) and companion Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) was completed. SRCD was pivotal in the completion of this 13-year process generating a stable regulatory environment and permitting process for the next 30 years in the Suisun Marsh.

The SMP provides an environmental approval of ongoing managed wetland activities under the RGP 3, in addition to the following:

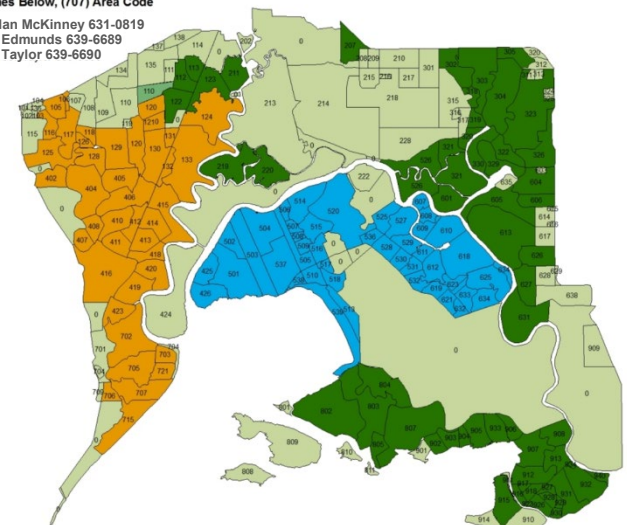
- Allows issuance of the LOP levee maintenance dredging permit
- Streamlines environmental permitting for managed wetland enhancement projects
- Supports SRCD's assistance and technical support for the management of water and wetlands
- Provides a programmatic review permitting process of future tidal wetland restoration projects

A. Water Manager Program

The Water Manager Program provides full-time support for three SRCD biologists and support for a half-time supervisor to coordinate and improve water management practices on privately owned lands in the Suisun Marsh. This program is funded by a contractual agreement with the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) through the 2015 Suisun Marsh Preservation Agreement (SMPA) to improve wildlife habitats on Suisun Marsh managed wetland and also mitigate adverse effects on Suisun Marsh of the Central Valley Project (CVP), State Water Project (SWP), and a portion of other upstream diversions. It provides for the following Water Manager Program activities:

- *Assist landowners in implementing and updating individual duck club management plans*
- *Promote and encourage wetland management activities to produce desired wildlife habitats*
- *Provide technical support and new scientific information to landowners on beneficial habitat management, water management, protection of sensitive species, and implementation of best management practices*
- *Supervise and coordinate the SRCD Portable Pump Program*
- *Assist landowners in planning yearly maintenance and enhancement projects*
- *Assist landowners in U. S. Army Corps Permit RGP 3 and LOP Applications*
- *Promote effective use of applied channel water to managed wetlands*
- *Monitor operation of fish screen facilities and assist in routine maintenance*
- *Assist landowners in avoiding mosquito production*
- *Assist landowners in annual Diversion Reporting Requirements*
- *Support Invasive Weed Control Program*

Suisun Marsh Water Manager Zones
Office Phone: (707) 426-2431
Cell Phones Below, (707) Area Code
■ Phelan McKinney 631-0819
■ Tim Edmunds 639-6689
■ Jeff Taylor 639-6690



B. Portable Pump Program

Under the SMPA Program, SRCD purchased 9 high capacity portable diesel pumps available to Suisun Marsh landowners to perform spring leach cycles and aid in the effective management and enhancement of marsh habitats. The pumps are rented to Suisun Marsh landowners at a subsidized hourly rate. The SRCD Water Managers oversee the requested pump distribution, installation, operation, fueling, and maintenance of the requested pumps.



8" Trash Pump by Pioneer

2021 Rental Rate: \$3/hour plus fuel

Pumps ~2,500-3,000 gpm

7-10 acre-feet per 24 hrs

Consumes ~1.9 gal./hr. of fuel**



12" Tow pump by Pumpmaster

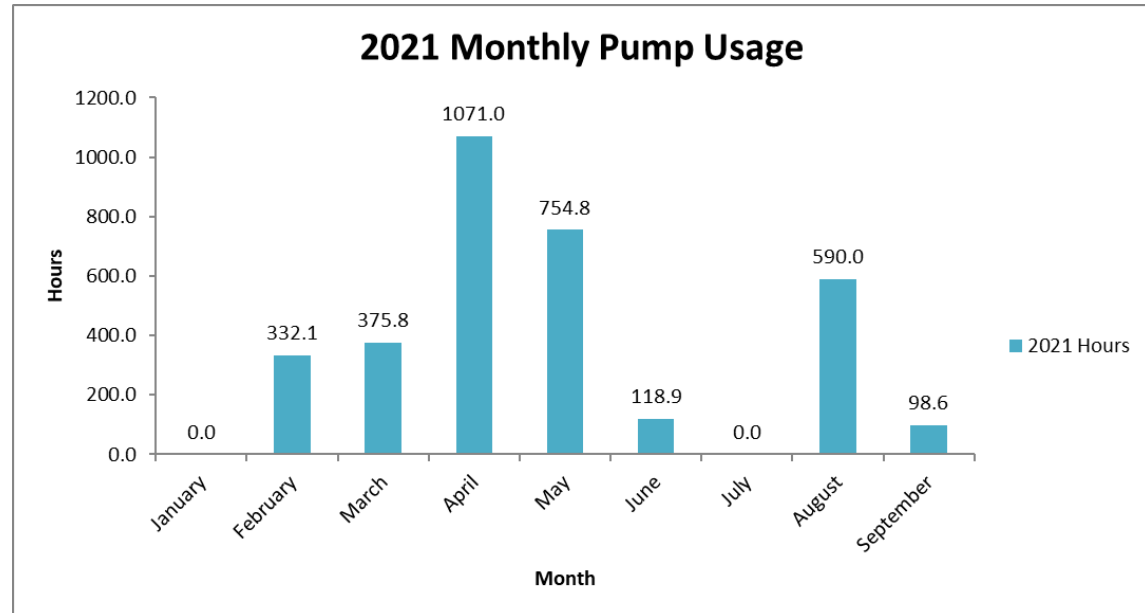
2021 Rental Rate: \$3/hour plus fuel

Pumps ~2,500-3,000 gpm

7-10 acre-feet per 24 hrs

Consumes ~1.2 gal./hr. of fuel**

(**Fuel consumption varies depending on site conditions and RPM rates)



Month	2021 Hours of Pumping
January	0.0
February	332.1
March	375.8
April	1,071.0
May	754.8
June	118.9
July	0.0
August	590.0
September	98.6
Total	3,341.2

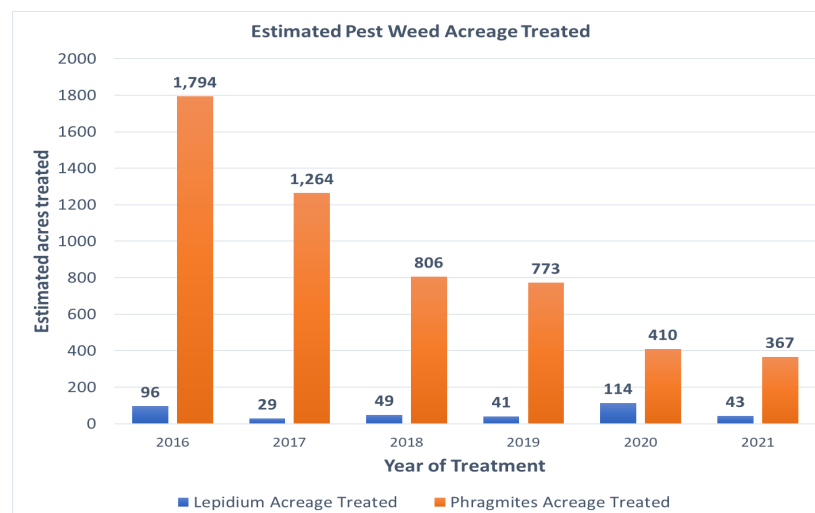
C. Invasive Weed Control Program

The Suisun Marsh wetlands and uplands have been altered by highly invasive non-native plants that threaten the diversity of natural plant communities in the Suisun Marsh. These non-native invasive plant species can form dense monospecific stands in a wide variety of wetland and upland habitats. Non-native plants eventually out-compete native vegetation causing degradation and modification of existing Suisun Marsh habitats. The main goal of SRCD Pest Weed Control Program is to assist landowners in the control and removal of invasive weeds in the Suisun Marsh. SRCD offers technical assistance and advice on control methods, best management practices options, and post treatment habitat restoration. Recent tests have included control application with a spray-drone.



Two species of particular concern in the Suisun Marsh are listed below, although there are other plants of emerging concern:

- Perennial Pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*): grows in large concentrations along levee edges and areas within the Suisun Marsh that are not flooded year around. The plant changes the soil composition which can eliminate other plants from emerging once it has established. Best time to spray is before plant sets seed and while its flowering (mid-April to May).
- Common Reed or Phragmites (*Phragmites australis*): grows in dense tall patches in semi-flooded and flooded areas. If unmanaged, stands can fill entire ponds and eliminate native and beneficial plants. Best time to spray is before seed set (mid-June to July).
- Emerging concern: species to watch include as Russian thistle (*Salsola soda*) and aquatic alligatorweed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*), water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), and water primrose (*Ludwigia hexapetala*).



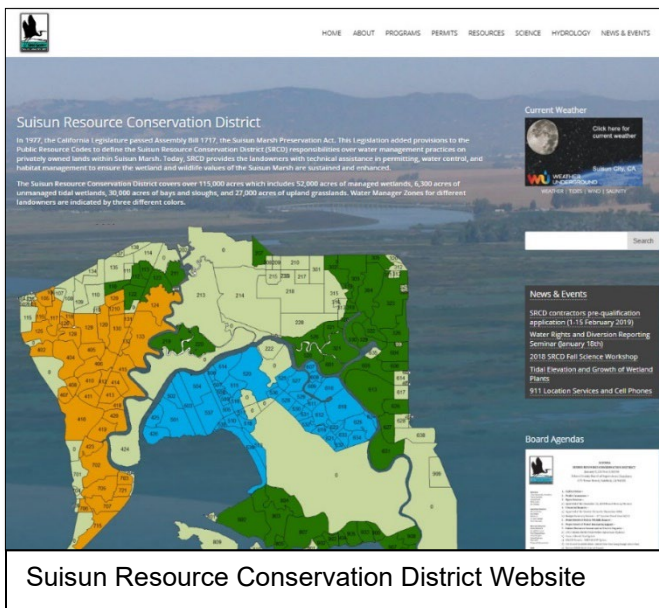
Salsola soda



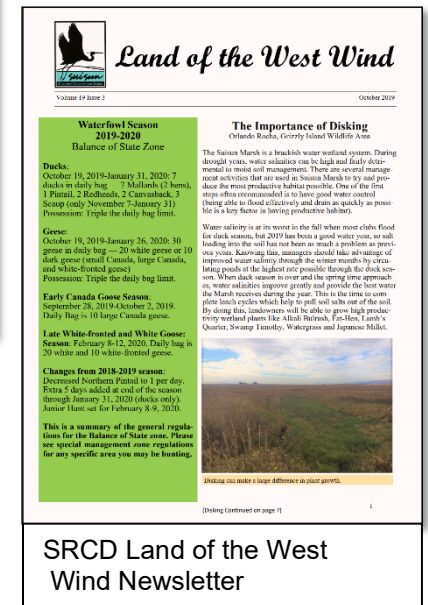
Lepidium latifolium

D. Landowner Outreach and Education

In January 2021, SRCD updated and reformatted our website (www.suisunrcd.org) including new information on resources, science, hydrology, and scientific news. SRCD produced and shared our quarterly newsletter – “Land of the West Wind”. SRCD hosted our Annual Spring Landowner Workshop, special meetings, and a Fall Landowner Science Workshop. SRCD Staff and Water Managers conducted on-site landowners meetings for habitat assessment and management advice. SRCD also performed routine mailing of permits, notifications, and programs to landowners in Suisun Marsh.



2021 SRCD Landowner Workshop participants



SRCD Land of the West Wind Newsletter

E. Dean Witter-Harvey Sorensen Marshlands Project at Lower Joice Island

On September 13th, 2000, SRCD became the owner of the historic 1,330-acre Lower Joice Island Hunting Club located between Suisun and Montezuma Sloughs on the southwest side of the Suisun Marsh. SRCD has continued the long history of waterfowl hunting heritage on this property; it has been managed continuously as a duck club since before 1906. SRCD designated the property as the Dean Witter-Harvey Sorensen Marshlands Project, as part of the generous donation of the island and the establishment of a dedicated endowment to fund management and operations of the island into the future. The endowment provides funding to SRCD for island operating expenses and as a result, SRCD does not incur any costs for island operations and maintenance. Today, the Marshlands Project supports SRCD's Vision and Mission of protecting and enhancing the Suisun Marsh wetland and wildlife resources by providing 239 acres dedicated as a conservation area in the Suisun Marsh for ongoing permitting needs. Lower Joice Island also provides SRCD staff a location to obtain practicable experience in assessing alternative management strategies for wetland management, operations, maintenance, invasive species control and an area for SRCD to conduct innovative scientific research and monitoring.

Highlights:

- A marsh management burn was successfully completed in 2021
- Pond bottom grading and swales were completed in the summer to improve the North Unit

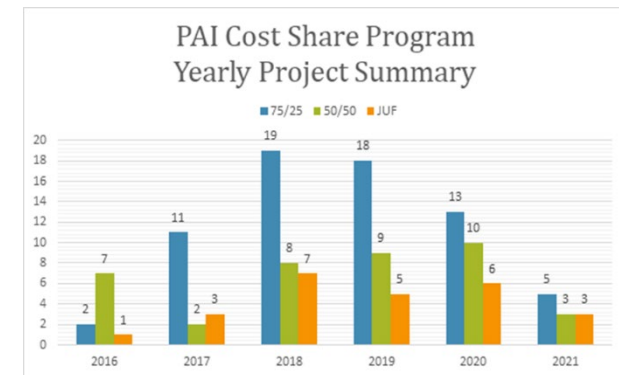


Managed Wetland Enhancement and Cost Share Support

SRCD worked with conservation partners including the Department of Water Resources (DWR), California Waterfowl Association (CWA), Ducks Unlimited (DU), Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), UC Davis (UCD), United States Geological Survey (USGS), and SF Bay Restoration Authority to pursue grants to promote the protection and enhancement of Suisun Marsh managed wetland values and wildlife resources. Grant applications for enhancement of managed wetland habitats in 2019 included partnership proposals for the following projects:

A. Completed 11 infrastructure improvements under the 2021 Preservation Agreement Implementation Cost-share Program

SRCD implements the SMPA Preservation Agreement Implementation (PAI) Fund which provides funds from DWR and USBR for managed wetland infrastructure improvements. The SMPA objective is to improve wildlife habitats on Suisun Marsh managed wetland and also mitigates adverse effects on Suisun Marsh of the Central Valley Project (CVP), State Water Project (SWP), and a portion of other upstream diversions. The PAI program provides 75:25 cost-share funding for drainage infrastructure improvements on individual parcels, 50:50 for interior structures and drainage, and 75:25 for joint use facilities benefiting two or more properties. In 2021, 11 proposed projects carried over from 2020 -- no new PAI projects were considered because of funding limitations in DWR and USBR programs.



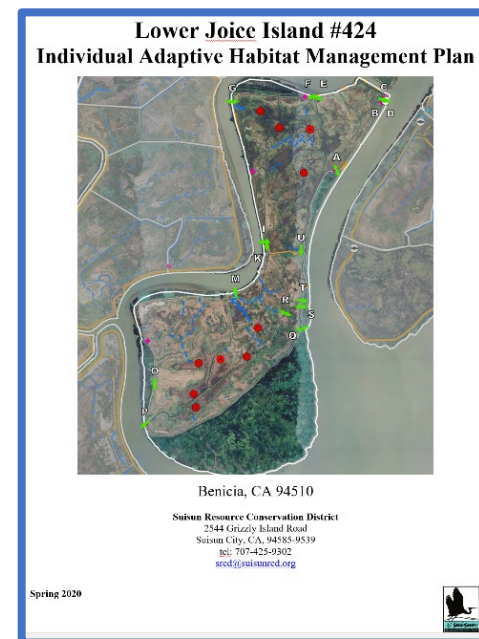
B. Drafted the Individual Ownership Adaptive Habitat Management Plan Updates

The goals of the Individual Ownership Adaptive Habitat Management Plans (IMPs) are to provide managed wetland landowners with an overview of background information describing existing conditions and operations on managed wetlands in the Suisun Marsh. These IMPs provide wetland management guidance to support diverse waterfowl and wildlife habitat. The plans satisfy regulatory needs for San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) permits for routine maintenance on existing managed wetland facilities. If wetland management is being implemented based on a Certified Plan, landowners do not need a BCDC Marsh Development Permit (MDP) for routine maintenance of existing managed wetlands or maintenance of existing water management facilities. However, new managed wetland water management facilities such as exterior drain pipes, rip rap, bulkhead walls, or pump platforms, or an activity that meets the BCDC definition of “development” will require a BCDC MDP. If new construction, replacement, or improvements are needed on the clubhouse area, building structures, or boat docks, the landowner should consult with Solano County Department of Resource Management (DRM) and BCDC for permitting requirements.

The existing physical, regulatory, and biological conditions in the Suisun Marsh affect wetland management strategies and determines the resulting habitat quality, and ultimately the species that will use the habitat. Wetland habitat managers must continuously adaptively manage their properties in order to achieve desired management objectives. However, the initial IMPs were written in the 1970s and 1980s and have not been updated since that time. In 2021, SRCD completed the final drafts under a new template to incorporate the existing state of scientific knowledge for BCDC certification.

C. Provided Assistance to DWR through Support Contracts

SRCD is working with the Department of Water Resources to support their management efforts within Suisun Marsh. In 2021, this included both a Suisun Marsh support contract and a Mein’s Landing support contract for infrastructure maintenance and wetland management support. SRCD provides assistance with small projects that may be accomplished with the SRCD pre-qualified vendors who are enrolled each year to bid on jobs issued by the District.



D. Cooperated on a Greater Bay Area Climate Hub Project

SRCD continued to work with a consortium of Resource Conservation Districts led by the Contra Costa RCD to advance information and support for climate change adaptation. The project was an effort to establish a regional hub to encourage and inform carbon sequestration on farms, ranches, wetlands, and uplands within the greater Bay Area region. This group worked to establish a network that would promote carbon farming activities within the region and the >500,000 acres of open space, rangeland, and agriculture. The consortium worked to develop a joint proposal for developing a climate hub that would service areas through the RCD regions.

E. Worked on Suisun Marsh Essential Fish Screen project

In the fall of 2020, SRCD was awarded a competitive grant proposal by the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (Measure AA) entitled “Wetlands without Water? Rehabilitating the Essential Fish Screens of Suisun Marsh for Habitat Resiliency.” The Restoration Authority was established in 2008 and funded in 2016 under Measure AA to apply a parcel tax in Bay Area counties providing funds to protect, restore, or enhance San Francisco Bay and its habitats. This project identified a critical need for renovating the essential fish screens (EFS) of Suisun Marsh that allows diversion of water for wetland management along Montezuma Slough while protecting endangered fish from entrainment. In partnership with Ducks Unlimited and private landowners, SRCD worked to assess the renovation needed to upgrade 14 EFS installed in the early 1990s that have outlived their useful life and are in various states of disrepair. The project included upgrading antiquated solar systems powering 6 remote fish screens, improving EFS maintenance capacity, completing repairs on the Worthington EFS (#634) in the fall of 2021 to determine best renovation methods and modern materials, and developing a comprehensive blueprint plan with detailed cost estimates required to fix the remaining 13 EFS systems. A follow-up proposal was submitted to request the funds to undertake the other 13 EFS renovation projects in the upcoming cycles of Restoration Authority funding.

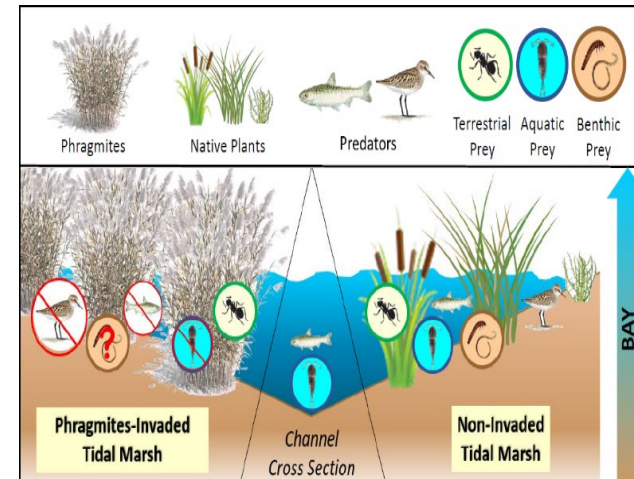
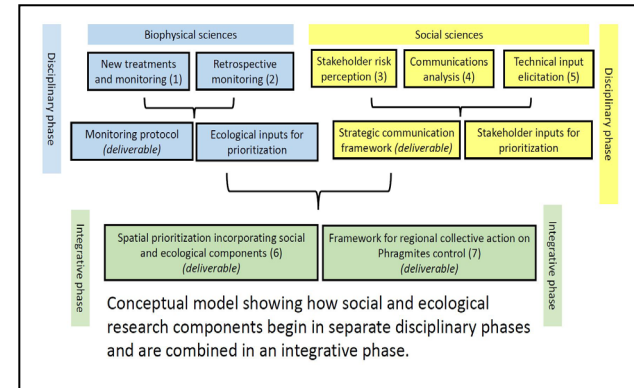


F. Obtained Grant for “Applying science-based conservation to control invasive species: fostering collective action among private and public stakeholders” (\$969k)

In June 2021, SRCD was awarded a grant from the Delta Stewardship Council to undertake a socioecological study on control of invasive *Phragmites*. The SRCD led study involved 4 universities (Utah State, Purdue, Santa Clara, Chapman) to evaluate how integrating social and ecological science disciplines could improve understanding and approaches to invasive species control. The project will include the involvement of undergraduate students as well as 3 postdoctoral candidates from the academic institutions to learn about marsh management and perspectives on controlling an invasive species.

G. Supported a Delta Stewardship Council Science Fellow

Operations Manager Dr. John Takekawa served as the SRCD community mentor for Dr. Richelle Tanner, a recipient of a Delta Stewardship Council (DSC) competitive science fellowship. The request for \$230K over 2 years was submitted in late December 2019 and funded in 2020 with field extending through 2021. It proposed a study to examine the early development of the Tule Red Tidal Restoration, the first tidal restoration completed in October 2019 under the Suisun Marsh Habitat Management, Restoration, and Preservation Plan EIS/EIR. However, invasion and expansion of Eurasian *Phragmites australis* in Suisun Marsh threatens to undermine the ecological benefits of tidal restoration efforts. *Phragmites* grows rapidly in disturbed areas and creates dense stands of vegetation impenetrable to fish and wildlife. In this project, Dr. Tanner examined colonization of *Phragmites* in a new restoration site; determine its effect on aquatic, benthic, and terrestrial invertebrate prey items; and examine the



possible consequences to fish and wildlife predators. Dr. Tanner completed her postdoctoral work through UC Davis (Dr. Anne Todgham) and was hired in a tenure-track position at Chapman University.

H. Received Grant to Examine the Future Persistence of the Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse

On behalf of the research team, SRCD submitted and was awarded a \$198K competitive grant proposal to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) San Francisco Bay Fund for a project on “Future of the Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse and other native wetland species in the San Francisco estuary: tracking an inevitable decline or guiding a resilient response? Phase 2” This project will address the lack of comprehensive recovery information for the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse (SMHM) and other small mammals through a unified assessment and survey approach. A comprehensive SMHM survey in a single season has never been conducted in 50 years, but recent studies demonstrate that SMHM inhabit managed wetlands as well as tidal wetlands. There is a critical need to fill this information gap in light of future land use and climate threats, and the project goal was to coordinate a team of experts to conduct the first single-season, estuary-wide survey to determine which areas are most resilient.



The findings will be summarized in population color intensity “heat” maps that will identify key areas to help us understand how and where we should focus recovery actions. Instead of tracking an inevitable decline, we propose this study to proactively guide a resilient response. Findings from this study will support the ultimate goal of identifying priority areas to increase future wetland resilience. Phase 1 included compilation of existing information, development of the approach, and a pilot test of coordinated surveys and methods including collection of genetic samples, and Phase 2 implemented the coordinated survey, but the project was delayed from 2021 to 2022 in light of Covid-19 restrictions. The resulting survey data will be used to create heat maps of populations summarizing their likely resiliency. Coordinators will include the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Services (Ecological Services and Refuges), USGS Western Ecological Research Center, and WRA, Inc.

I. Participated in a National Science Foundation Project on Avian Influenza

SRCD Operations Manager Dr. John Takekawa was requested to participate as a subject expert on wild migratory birds in a joint, multi-million-dollar USA-China National Science Foundation (NSF) study on the global threat of avian influenza. The goal of the NSF project, entitled “US-China Collab: Harnessing Big Data to understand and predict diversity and transmission of human- and animal-

infected avian influenza viruses in China” is to better understand the role of wild waterfowl in spread of this disease and provide solutions to reduce transmission. Prior to the novel coronavirus pandemic of 2019, avian influenza viruses were feared to be the next large pandemic and still remain a significant threat.

During the past 20 years, highly pathogenic avian influenza viruses have infected poultry across the world resulting in losses of billions of dollars. A subset of viruses has caused the death of thousands of people since 2013, and as these viruses persist, economic losses and health concerns to the agricultural, wild, and human communities remain. Knowledge from epicenters such as China remain limited which substantially hinders development of prediction and forecasting models. The investigators will study diversity and transmission dynamics to advance the research in ecology and evolution of influenza viruses and strengthen surveillance and pandemic preparedness. The U. S. research team is led by the University of Oklahoma (Dr. Xiangming Xiao) with partners USGS Patuxent Research Center (Dr. Diann Prosser), and St. Jude Research Hospital (Dr. Richard Webby) and three institutions in China (China CDC, China Agricultural University, and Sun Yat-sen University).

J. Partnering in Enhancing Public Use and Restoring Habitats at Belden’s Landing

Belden’s Landing is the primary boat launch in the heart of the Suisun Marsh. In 2021, work continued on this project supported by a \$93k competitive grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) San Francisco Bay Conservation Fund. It will restore the degraded marsh removing invasive species and planting native flora, develop a site vision and boardwalk plan with the community, improve existing facilities, and installing a non-motorized launch dedicated as a Bay Area Water Trail trailhead. The project is a partnership of the Solano County Parks, SRCD, and DFW.



Suisun Resource Conservation District
2544 Grizzly Island Road
Suisun City, CA, 94585-9539
Tel: (707) 425-9302
Email: srcd@suisunrcd.org
Website: www.suisunrcd.org



Suggested Citation: Suisun Resource Conservation District. 2021. 2021 Annual Report. Unpublished Report. Suisun Resource Conservation District. Suisun City, CA. 19pp.