



Special Subcommittee on Imported Water

The Delta – A Historical Perspective

Item 3g
June 23, 2025

Item 3b Outline

Subject

The Delta – A Historical Perspective

Purpose

This is an initial presentation in a series of Board discussion sessions regarding the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and watershed, its history, how it has evolved, key stressors, and its value to Metropolitan and others.

Next Steps

Board feedback and schedule of upcoming discussion presentations

The Delta

Hub of California's Water Supply & Economy



1. Portions of the North Coast Watershed are protected under the Federal & State Wild & Scenic Rivers Act (Klamath, Trinity, Mad, and Eel River)

The Delta

Watershed Runoff



1. Portions of the North Coast Watershed are protected under the Federal & State Wild & Scenic Rivers Act (Klamath, Trinity, Mad, and Eel River)

A detailed black and white illustration of a historical tidal marsh landscape. The scene features a winding waterway through a flat, grassy area. Numerous birds, including large wading birds like herons and smaller flocks, are shown in flight across the sky. In the foreground and middle ground, several deer are grazing on the marsh vegetation. The overall atmosphere is one of a thriving, natural ecosystem.

THE DELTA

Historical

Pre-1850s – 700,000 acres of tidal marshes



THE DELTA

Historical

Pre-1850s – Narrow and winding channels



THE DELTA

Historical

The Delta has sustained Indigenous Peoples for 5,000 years

Bay Miwok, Coast Miwok, Plains Miwok, Maidu, Nisenan, Ohlone, Patwin, Pomo, Wappo, Wintun, Washoe, and Yokuts



THE DELTA

Historical

Post-1850 – Settlers began draining tidal marshes

THE DELTA

Historical

Constructed over 1,000 miles of levees

Early 1800s

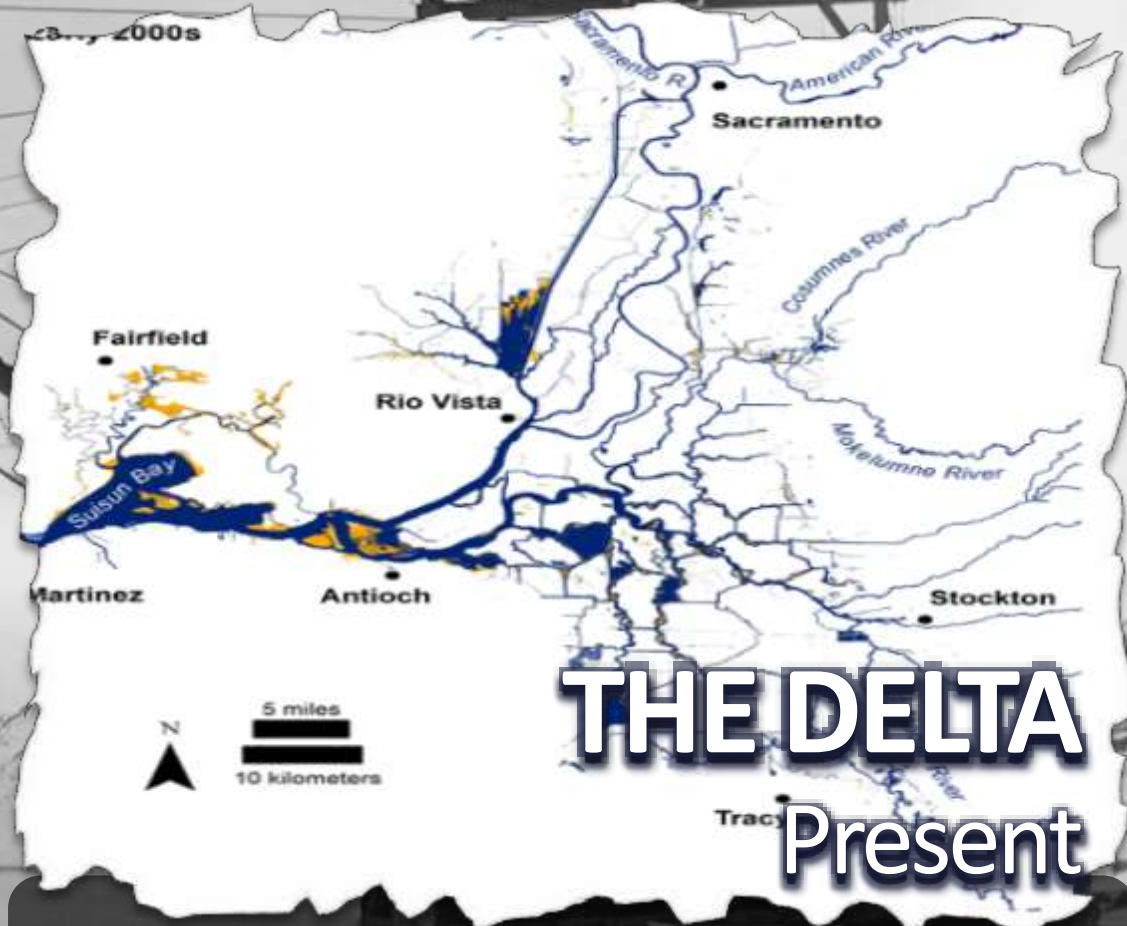
THE DELTA

Historical



5,000 miles of channels

Early 2000s



THE DELTA

Present

700 miles of channels

THE DELTA

Historical



from marshes

THE DELTA

Present

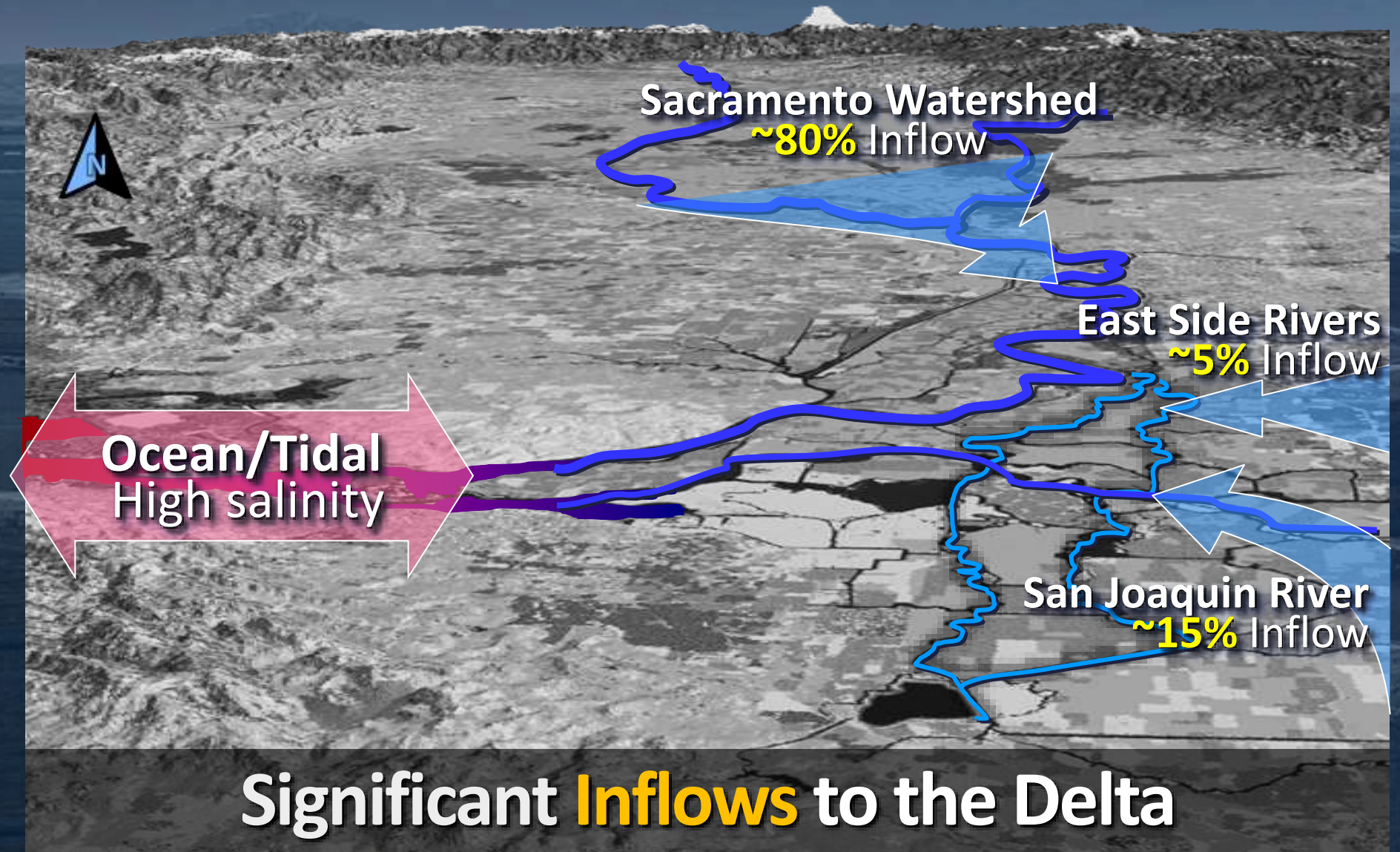


to farmland

95%
Natural
Habitat
Loss

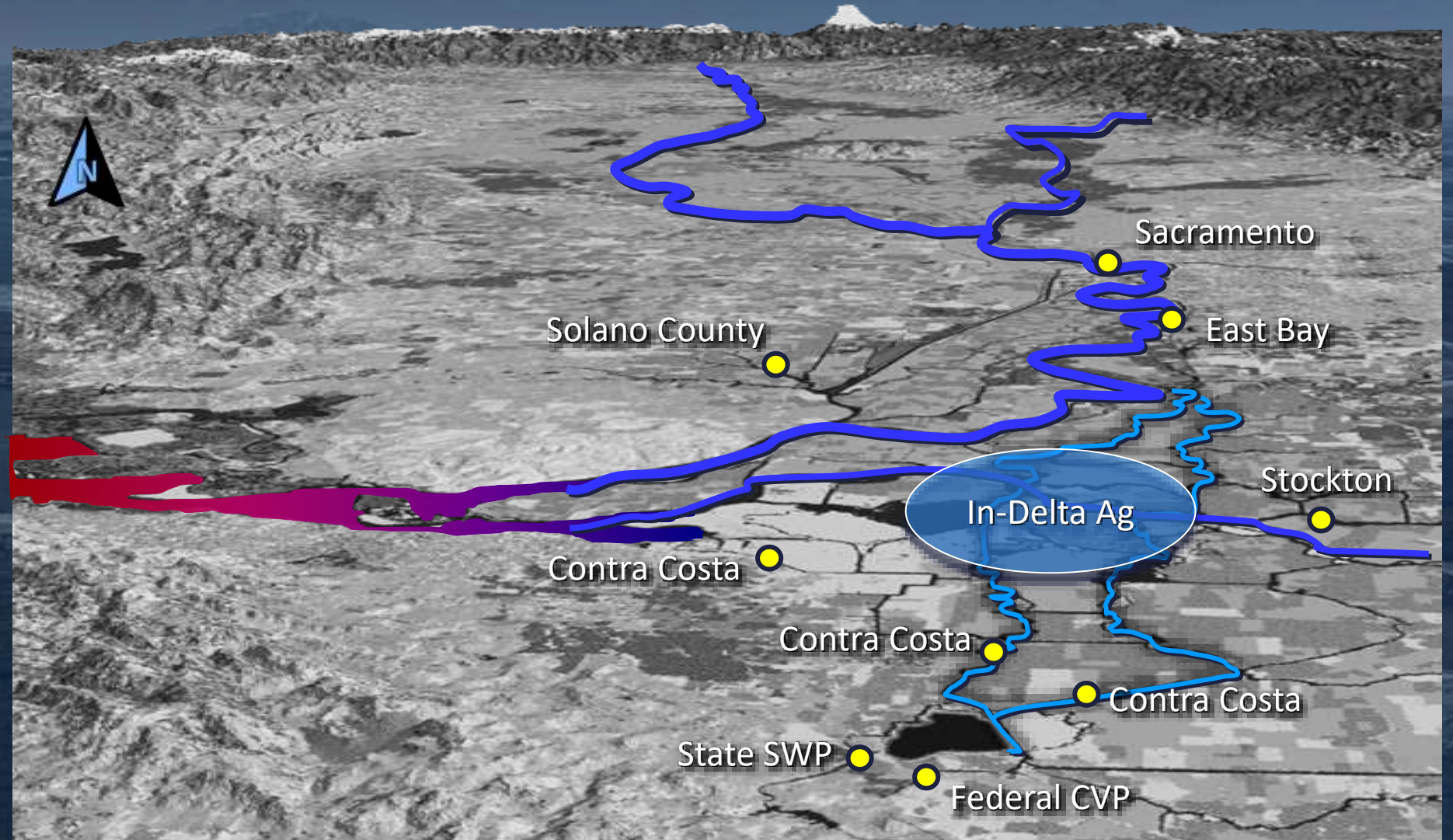
THE DELTA

Present Day



THE DELTA

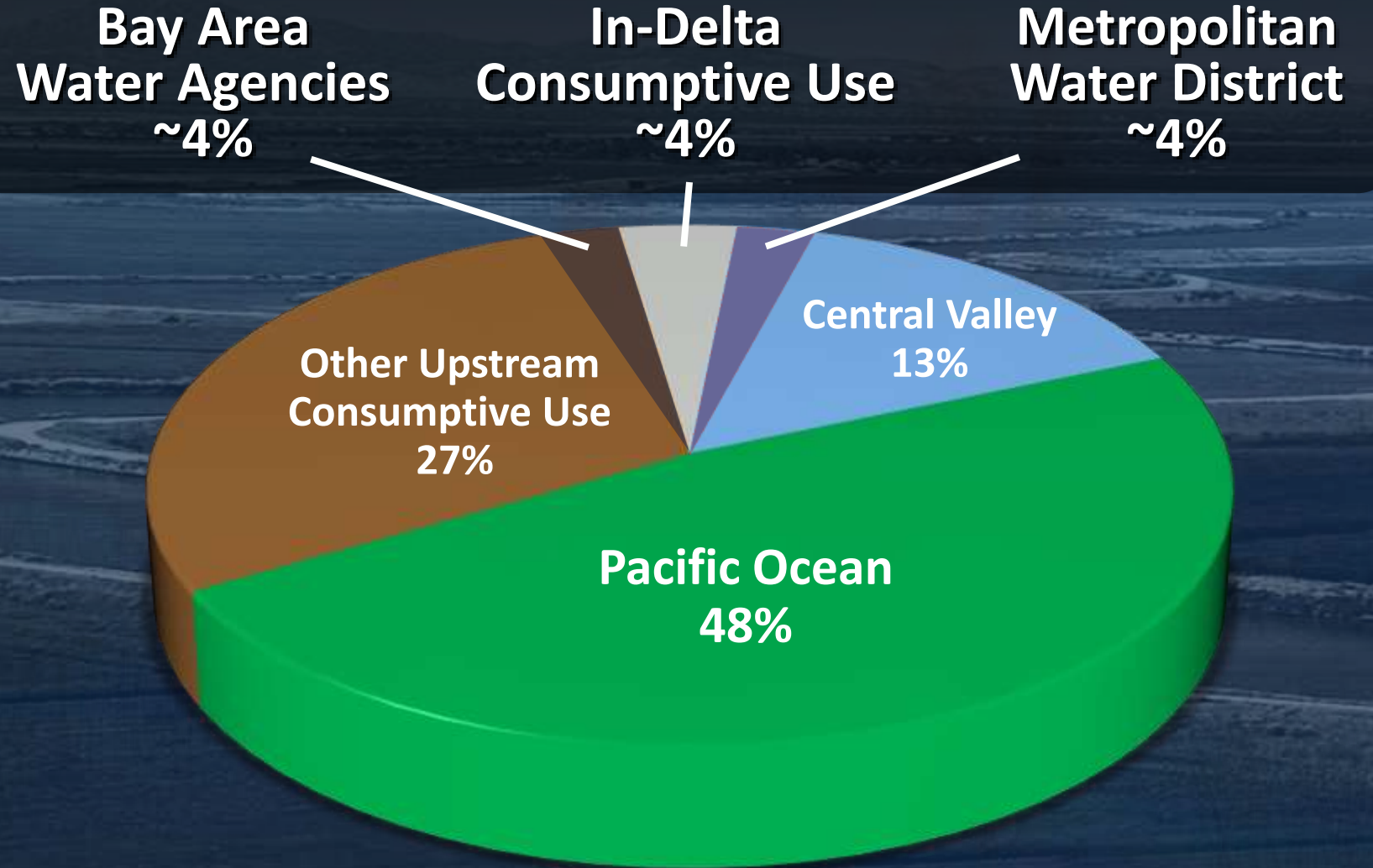
Present Day



Significant **Diversions** from the Delta

THE DELTA

Present Day



Key Delta Water Usage



Delta Stressors

Key Delta Stressors



Flood & Seismic



Sea-Level Rise



Fishery Declines



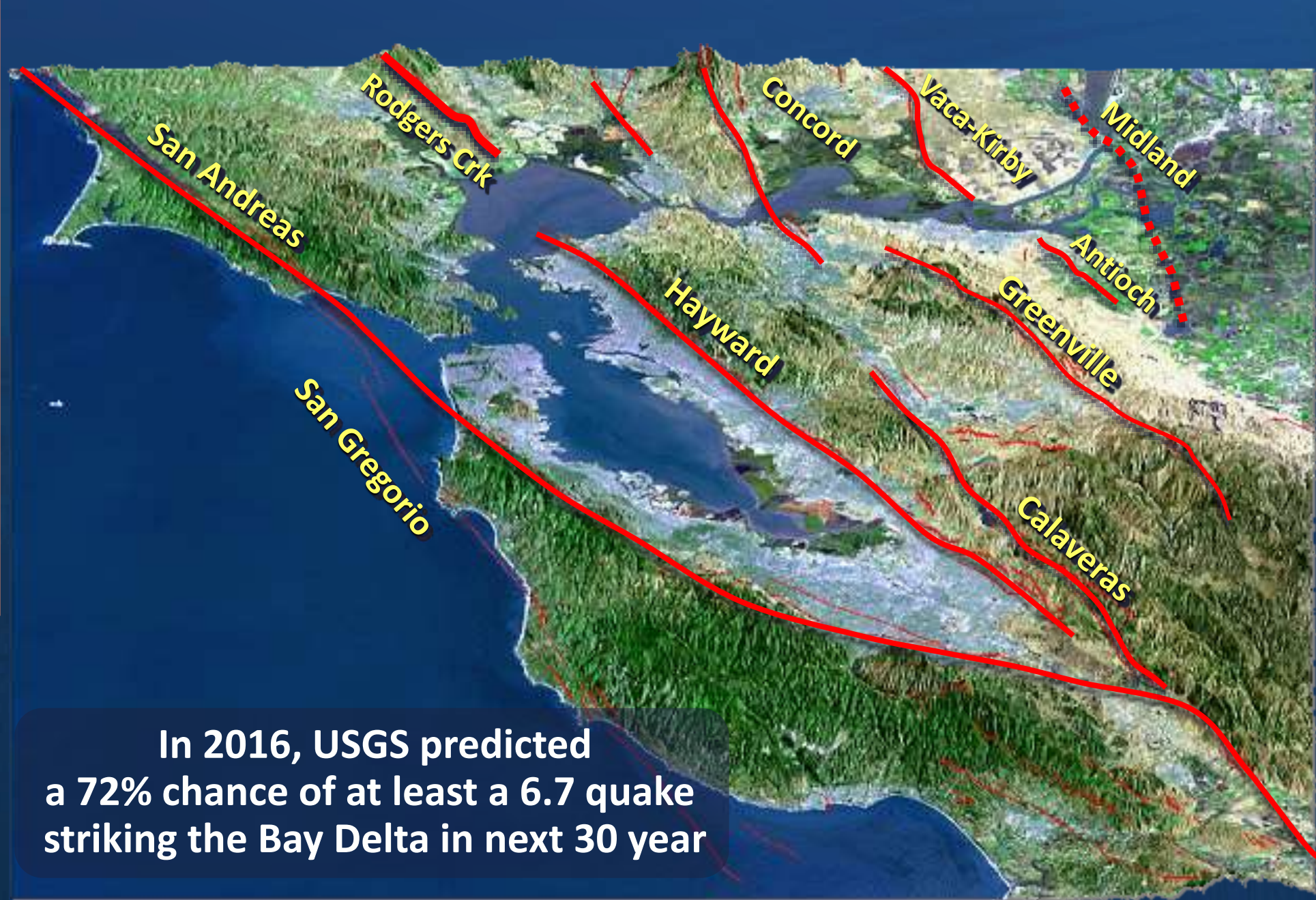
Subsidence Control

Flood Control



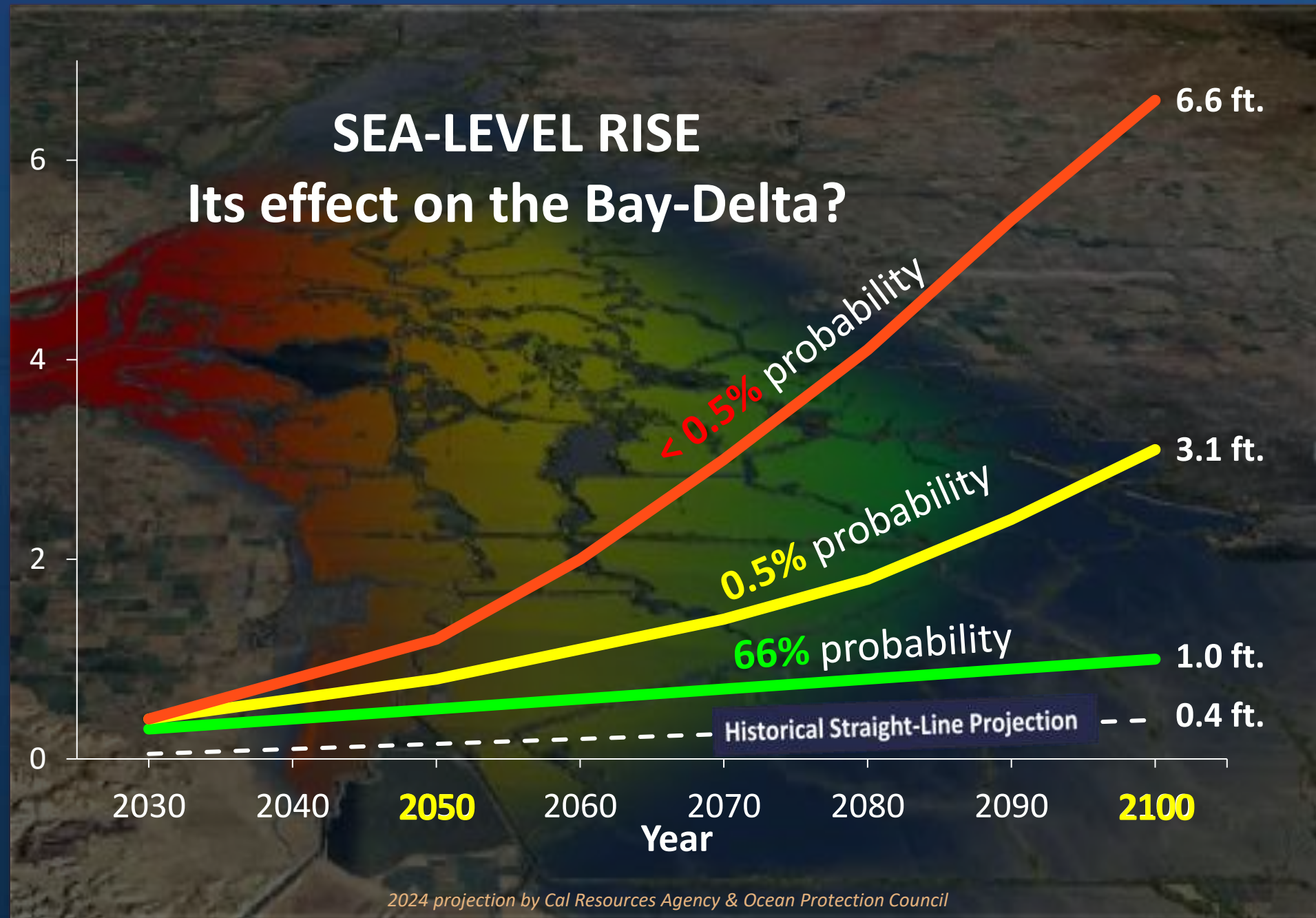
Twitchell Island (2006)

Seismic Vulnerability

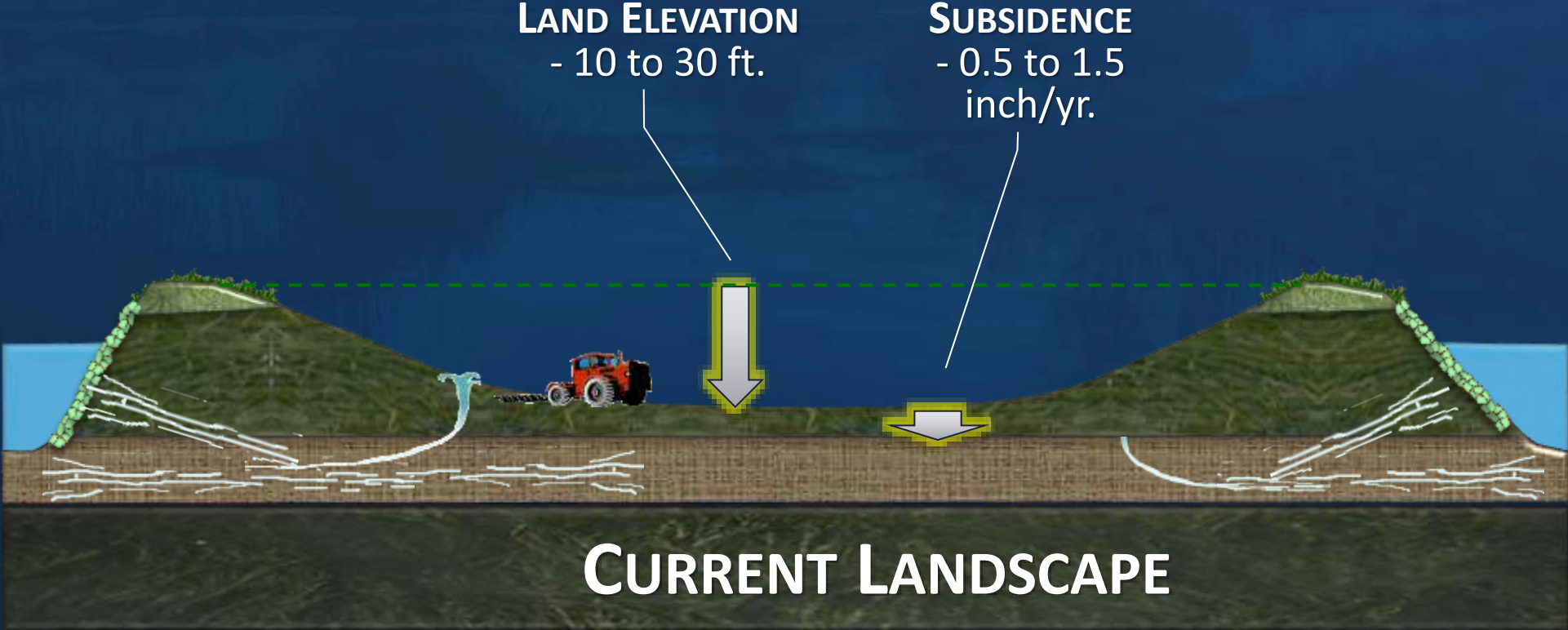


Sea-Level Rise

2024 Projection



Subsidence



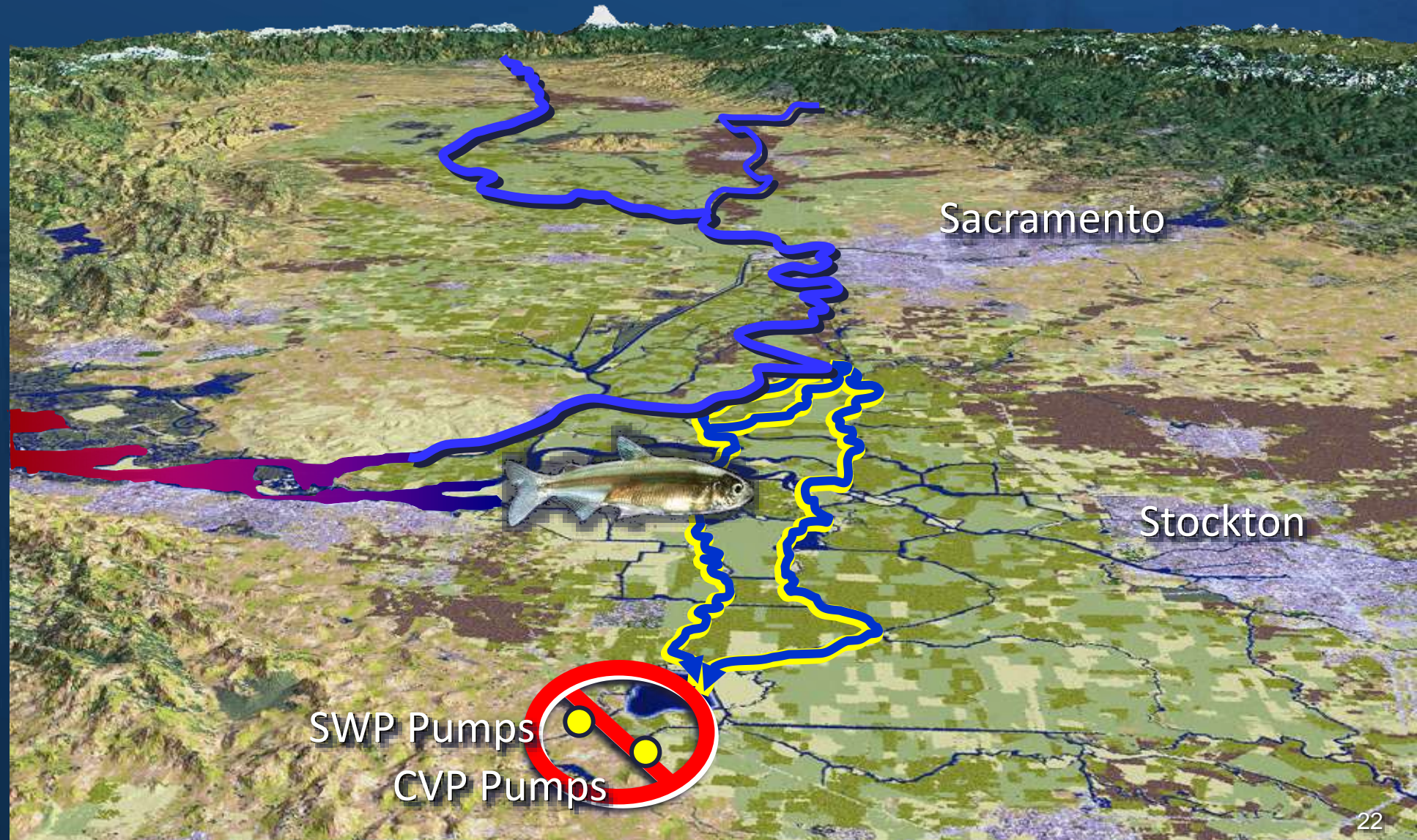
Fishery Declines

Regulatory restrictions ...



... lead to supply cutbacks

Regulations Impact Water Supplies



Other Delta Stressors



23



Value of the Delta

A map of California with a green line tracing a path from the northern mountains down to the Los Angeles area. Blue dots are placed along this path at various intervals. Three callout boxes with yellow text provide percentages for different regions: 'Bay Area - 33%', 'Central Valley - 23 to 90%', and 'Southern Cal - 30%'. The Los Angeles area is highlighted in yellow.

Total Surface Water supplied through the Delta

Bay Area – 33%

Central Valley – 23 to 90%

Southern Cal – 30%

Water to 27 million residents; 4th largest world economy

THE DELTA

Present Day



Supports 500,000 acres of farmland in the Delta,
and 3 million acres of farmland throughout the State



THE DELTA

Present Day

US crops grown in California (% total)

California is America's Fruit Basket ...
... Delta water supports it

• Honeydew	73 %
• Peaches	76 %
• Lettuce	78 %
• Dates	82 %
• Avocados	84 %
• Garlic	86 %
• Grapes	88 %
• Lemons	89 %
• Carrots	89 %
• Strawberries	90 %
• Broccoli	93 %
• Celery	94 %
• Nectarines	93 %
• Plums	93 %
• Tomatoes	94 %
• Apricots	95 %
• Pistachios	96 %
• Kiwi	97 %
• Figs	98 %
• Walnuts	99 %
• Almond	99 %
• Olives	100 %

THE DELTA

Present Day

A person is standing in a small motorboat on a wide, calm river. The person is wearing a dark jacket and a cap, and is holding a fishing rod. The boat is small and has a motor at the back. The water is very still, reflecting the colors of the sky. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and purple, indicating it is either sunrise or sunset. In the background, there is a line of trees and some buildings on the shore.

700 miles of rivers and sloughs; 55 fish species

THE DELTA

Present Day



2 Cargo Ship Ports

THE DELTA

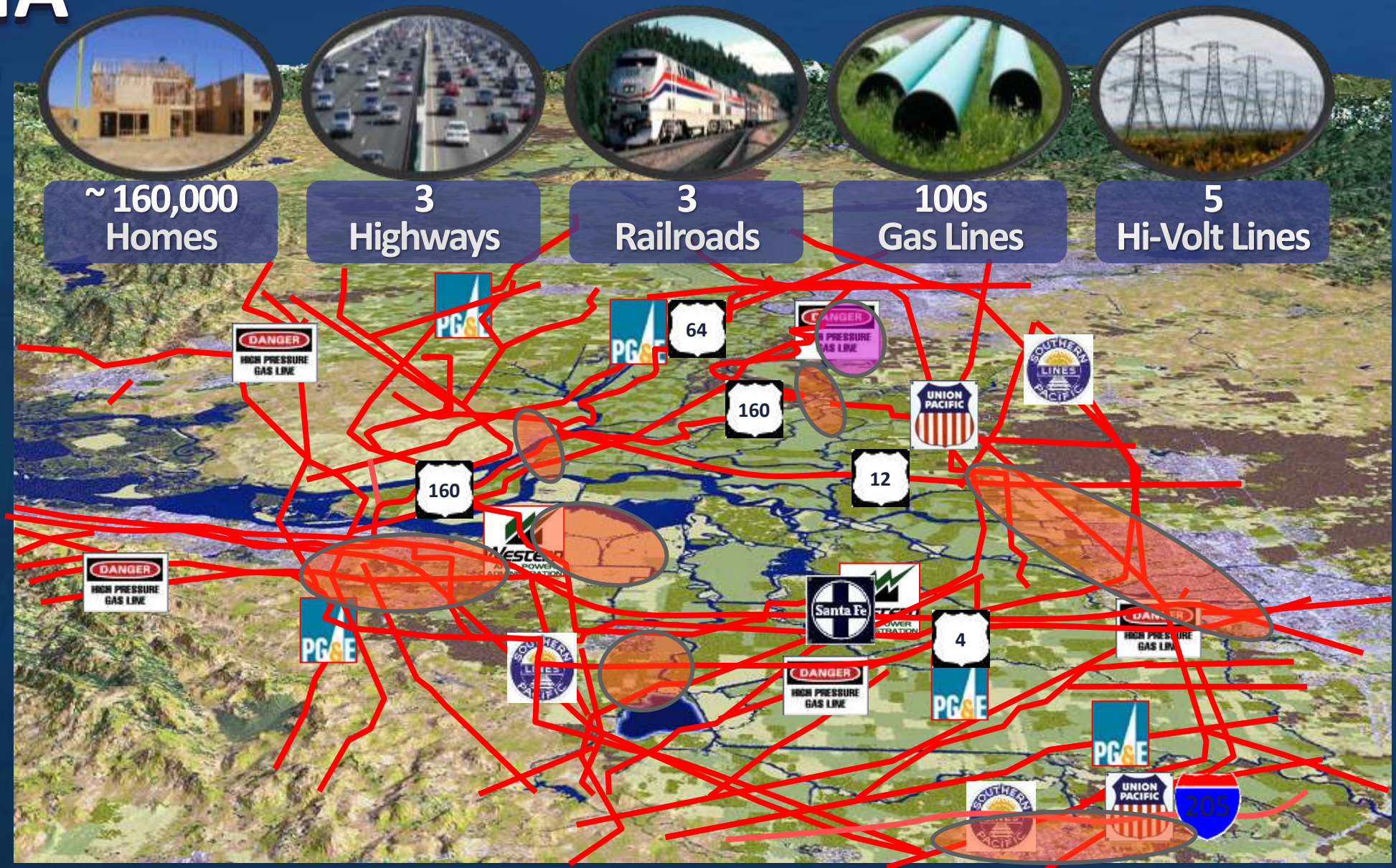
Present Day



Habitat for 250 species of migratory birds

THE DELTA

Present Day



Next Steps

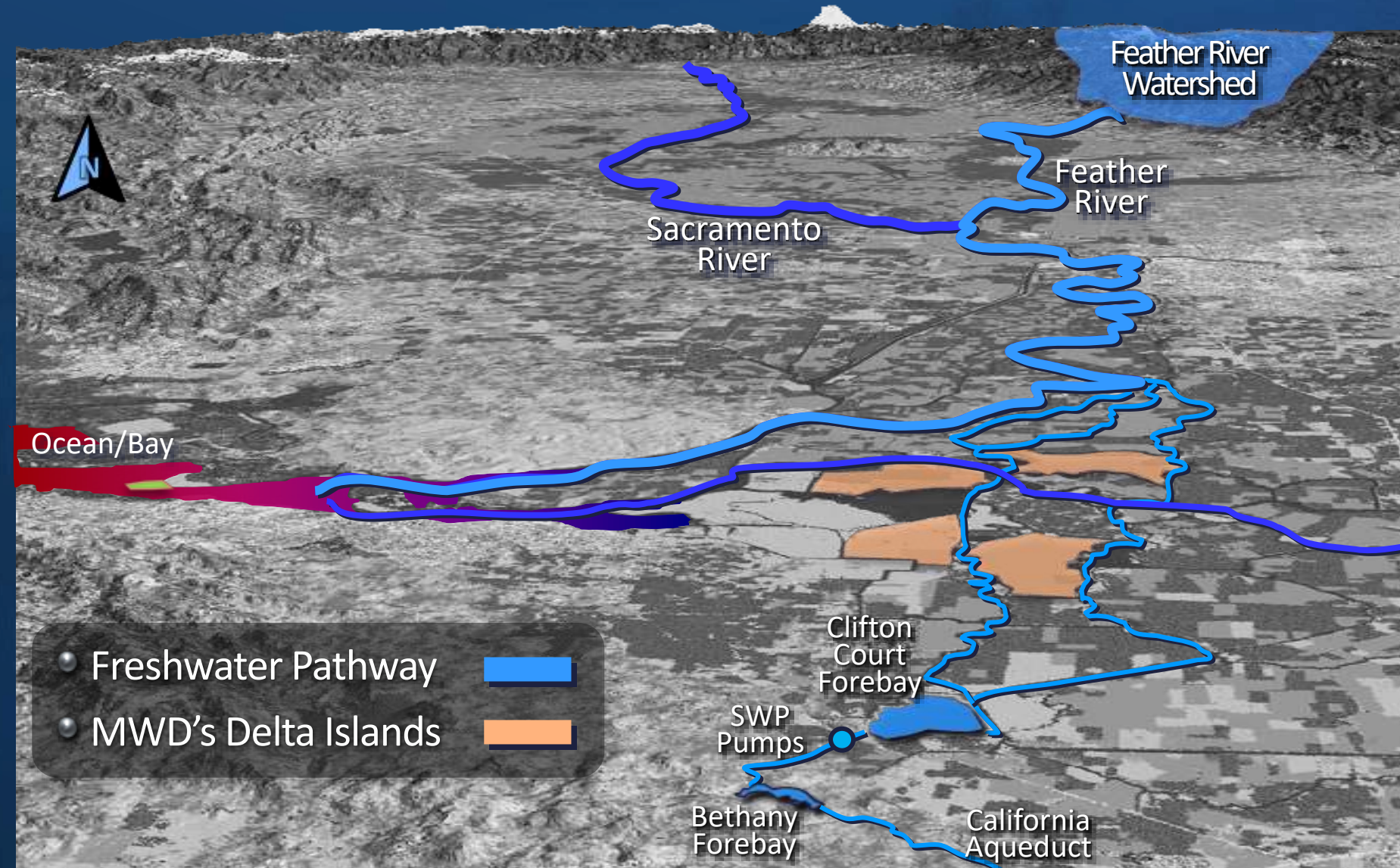
- Board Subcommittee Upcoming Discussions
 - Jun 2025 – The Delta – A Historical Perspective
 - Aug 2025 – Discussion of the Freshwater Pathway and Improvement Projects
 - Oct 2025 – Delta Assets, and Opportunities Update; Sacramento Watershed Update & Discussion



Preview of Upcoming Subcommittee Discussions

Board Subcommittee

Upcoming Discussions



Board Subcommittee

Upcoming Discussions

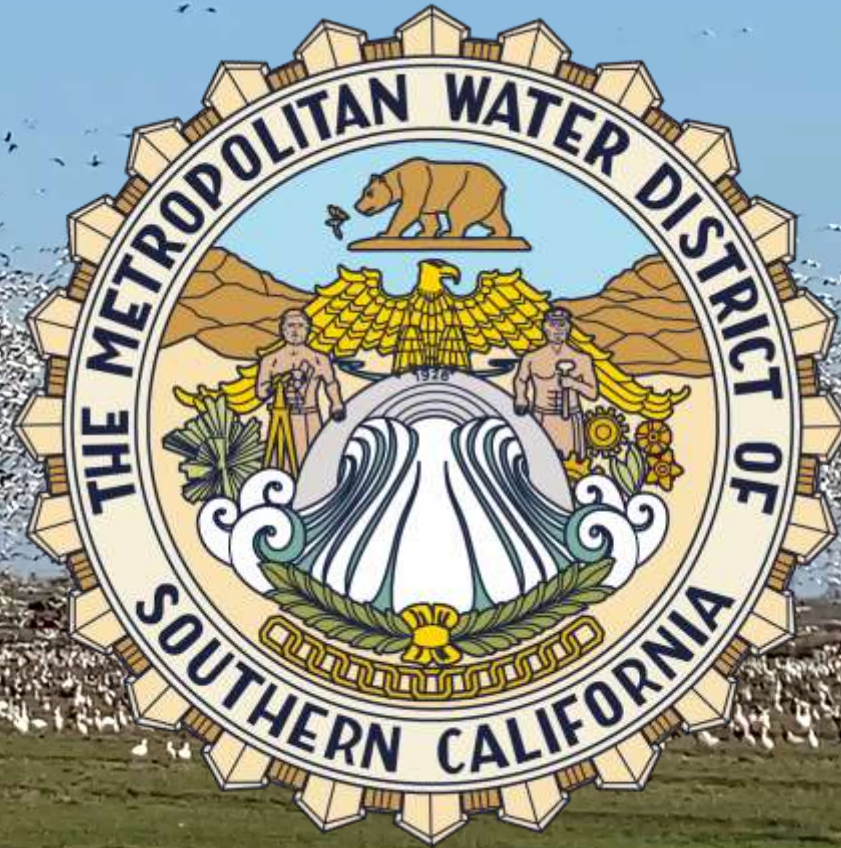
- Discussion - Delta
 - 80% or more of core SWP/CVP deliveries will flow through the Freshwater Pathway even with the proposed Delta Conveyance Project
 - What is the value of our Delta assets?
 - What is the value of the Freshwater Pathway?
- Discussion - Watershed
 - What are the issues in the upper watersheds that need addressing?

Board Subcommittee

Upcoming Discussions

- Watershed Forest Health
 - Climate change is driving key impacts
 - Increased wildfire frequency, size, and severity
 - Increased rain and less snow
 - Increased winter runoff





Snow & Speckled Geese, Ducks—Bouldin Island