
From: Ben King <bking@pacgoldag.com>

Sent: Monday, November 17, 2025 12:50 PM

To: Jensen, Laura@DWR <Laura.Jensen@water.ca.gov>; Steiner, Fern@CWC
<Fern.Steiner@cw.ca.gov>

Cc: Ben King <bking@pacgoldag.com>

Subject: Comments Regarding Agenda Item No. 9 - Material Change in Project Due To Subsidence Risks, Methylmercury Contamination Due To Dunnigan Pipeline and Change in Yolo Bypass Flows

Dear Chairwoman Steiner and Executive Director Jensen,

As you are aware the California Water Commission staff completed a Technical Review and calculated a Public Investment Score for the Sites Reservoir Project in May of 2018. After the Technical Review and the Public Investment Score were completed the project was downsized and the conveyance infrastructure was materially changed from the proposed Delevan Interconnect for Sacramento River flows to the proposed Dunnigan Pipeline. In the May 2018 Technical Review, the environmental water flows for the Delevan and Colusa National Refuges and Yolo Bypass were to be supplied by flows down the full length of the Colusa Basin Drain.

As noted, the Sites Reservoir Authority materially changed the Reservoir Project size and conveyance infrastructure after the 2018 Technical Review and scoring with the elimination of environmental flows down the full length of the Colusa Basin Drain in Colusa County and proposed a Dunnigan Pipeline interconnect to the Colusa Basin Drain. Under the Dunnigan Pipeline version water will back up approximately 13 miles into Colusa County and the environmental benefit of having of increased dissolved oxygen levels environmental water flows downstream from the Sites Reservoir were eliminated. Also eliminated was the provision for any flows for a six mile portion of the historical Colusa Trough portion of the Colusa Basin Drain between the Davis Weir Bladder Dam and the Balsdon Dam. This Revised Plan was submitted to the California Water Commission in November 2021 but omitted to address the subsidence risk to the Tehama Colusa Canal and the negative drainage and dissolved oxygen consequences of eliminating the downstream flows for the full length of the Colusa Basin Drain. The current plan with the Dunnigan Pipeline interconnect increases the likelihood of material methylmercury contamination because of the expected loss of dissolved oxygen associated with water flows backing up 13 miles rather than flowing downstream for the full length of the Colusa Basin Drain.

Most recently another material change in the Project was cited by a CDFW representative where the Project is not expected to provide the Yolo Bypass flows that were a key Ecosystem Improvement in the 2018 Technical Review.

In the CWC 2018 Water Storage Investment Program Determinations Summary the “ Staff Recommendation Regarding Determinations” the second paragraph States:

“Through remaining process steps, the Commission will have the opportunity to consider whether all required feasibility studies, permits and environmental documentation have been completed prior to determining each project’s final funding award. All applicable laws and regulations must be met to receive and maintain WSIP funding.”

Since the Commission is considering additional funding under Proposition 1 and is considering adding Proposition 4 funding – our question to the Commission is whether all “feasibility studies” and “environmental documentation” have been fully considered at this point where final funding levels will most likely be determined?

- **I have attached excerpts from Appendix I – Update on Subsidence in California for California Groundwater: Bulletin 118 – Update 2025 which shows subsidence on the Tehama Colusa Canal near Arbuckle has been trending at an average of 2 feet every 10 years. Have the costs of repairing the subsidence on the Tehama Colusa Canal and the potential for supply disruption down the Tehama Colusa Canal to the proposed Dunnigan Pipeline been considered? What is the real Resiliency of the Sites Reservoir if its only conveyance structure, the Tehama Colusa Canal, could experience 10 feet of subsidence in the next 50 years? What is the Public Benefit Ratio of a conveyance infrastructure without any planned redundancy?**
- **Have the findings of the Revised EIR regarding potential methylmercury contamination especially in the first 10 years of operation been considered by the CWC?**
- **Has the loss of the Yolo Bypass flows as an Ecosystem Improvement been considered?**

We realize that the proposed Sites Reservoir is a very important and needed water storage project for California and we support the Commission awarding the additional funds as proposed for this important and necessary project. We would recommend that the additional funds be awarded on the condition that a new Technical Review and Public Investment Score be completed by CWC Staff with input from the Sites Project Authority. The subsidence, the loss Ecosystem Improvements due to Yolo Bypass Flows and the potential for adverse methylmercury contamination are material challenges that need realistic mitigation plans and investments. If the mitigation actions and investment requirements are not considered now, they may never happen or never properly implemented. You must admit it would be kind of crazy to build a \$ 6 billion reservoir and rely on a conveyance structure that could sink by 10 feet in the next fifty years with no plan to manage this risk?. There needs to be an updated Technical Review with real mitigation plans developed and a plan by the Sites Authority to fund and pay for the needed mitigation plans and projects.

Thank you for your consideration and opportunity to comment.

Best Regards,

Ben King
Manager
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Appendix I. Update on Land Subsidence in California

California's Groundwater: Bulletin 118 – Update 2025

Public Draft

October 2025

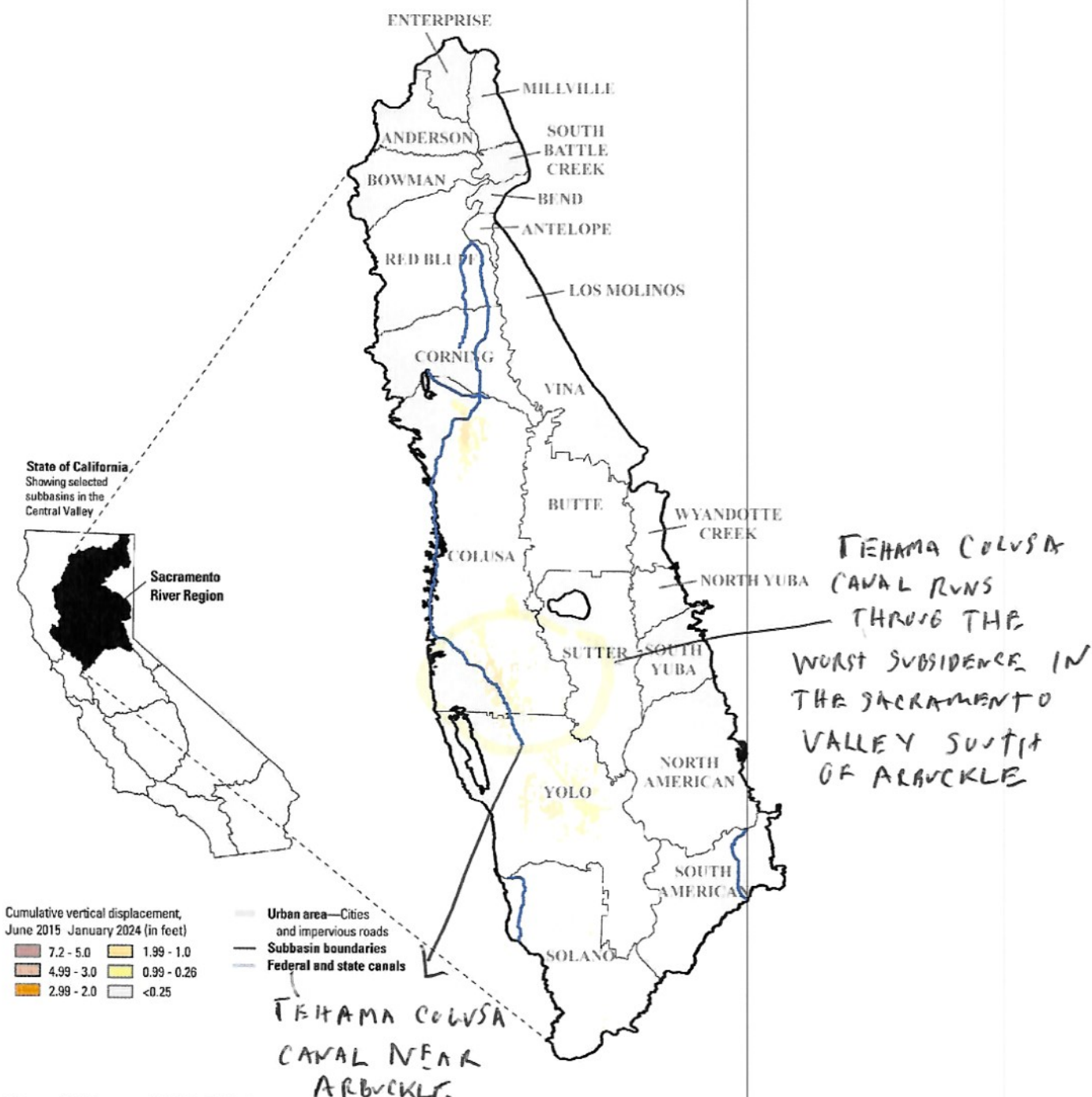


Figure 3-89. 2015–2024 land-surface subsidence from InSAR data in the Sacramento River region.

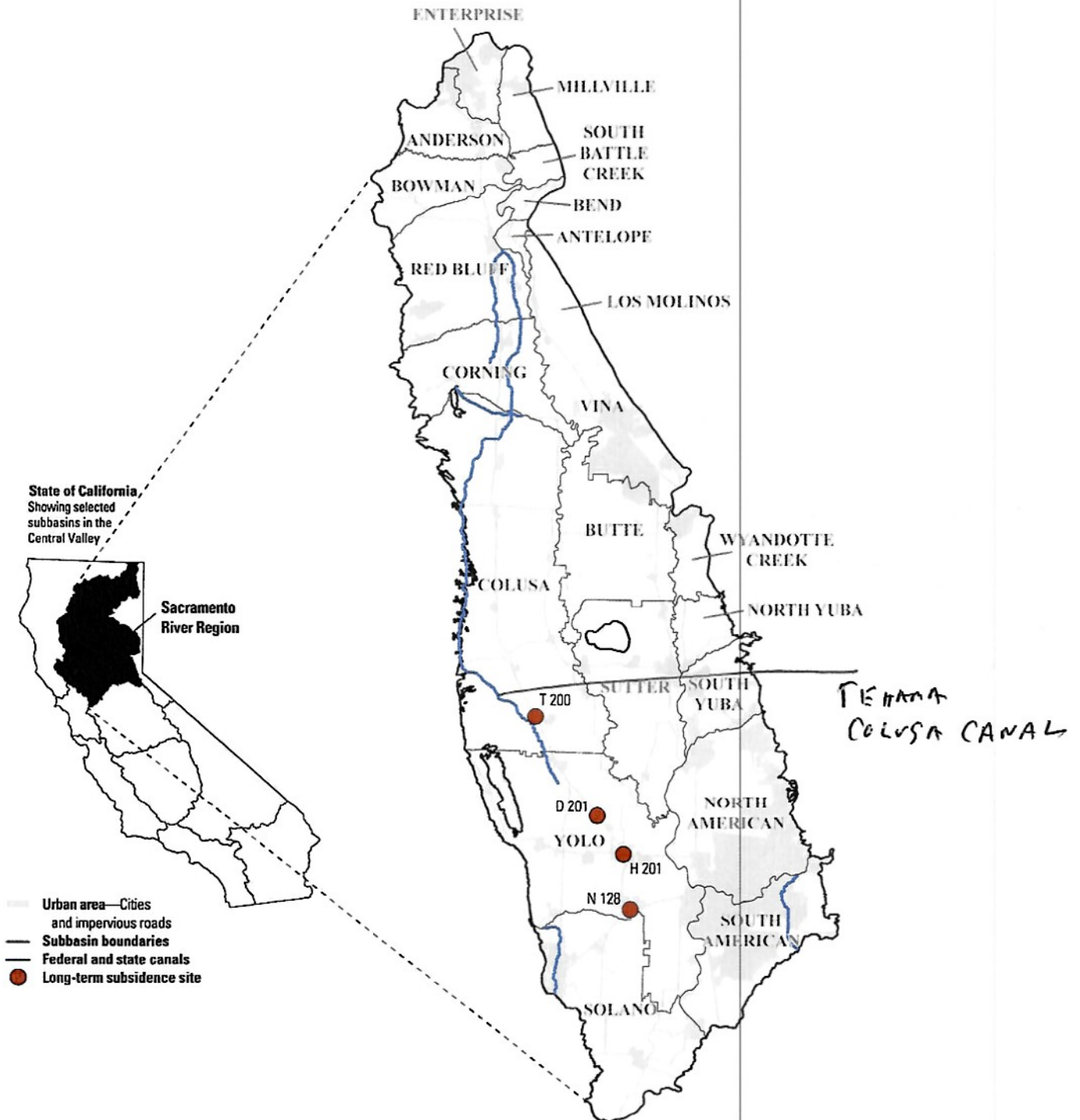


Figure 3-90. Long-term subsidence sites.

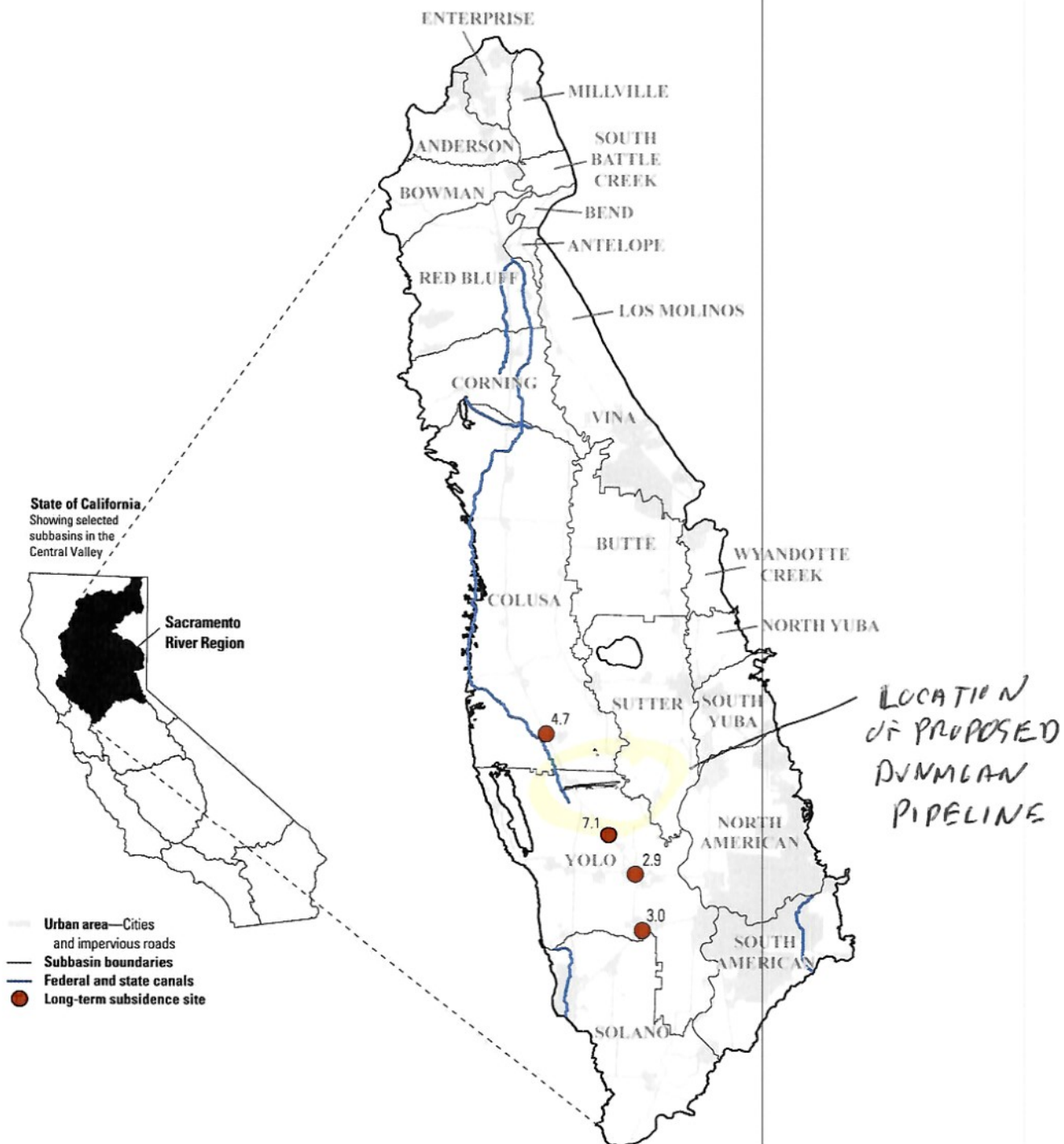


Figure 3-91. Cumulative subsidence 1926-1970.

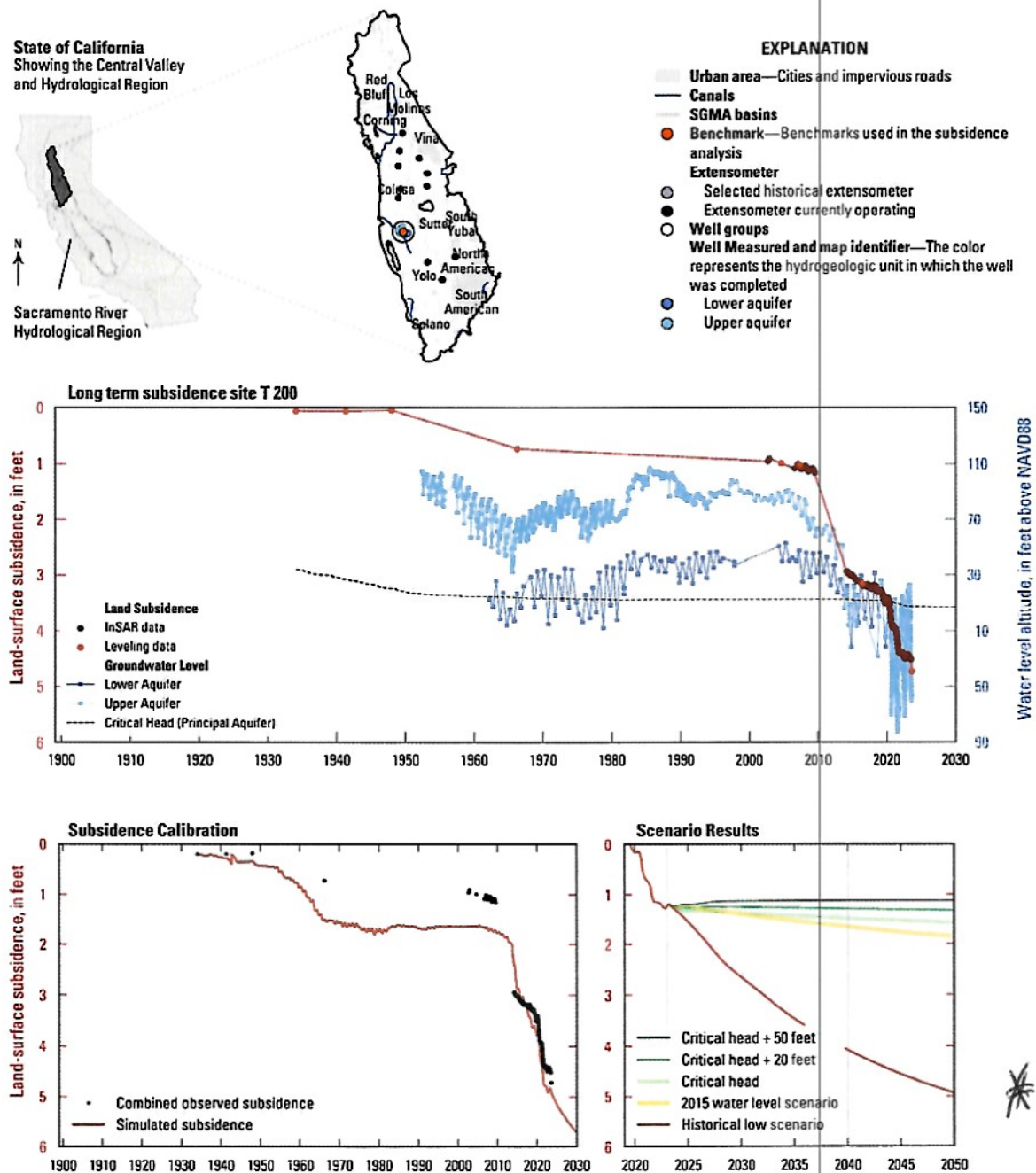


Figure 3-95. T 200 Long-term Subsidence Plot; Colusa Subbasin.

BETWEEN 2010
AND 2030
1.5 - 5.75 FEET

4.25 FEET IN 20 YEARS.