

Meeting Summary
Community Benefits Program Workshop
Delta Conveyance Project
California Department of Water Resources
April 14, 2021, 6pm - 8pm

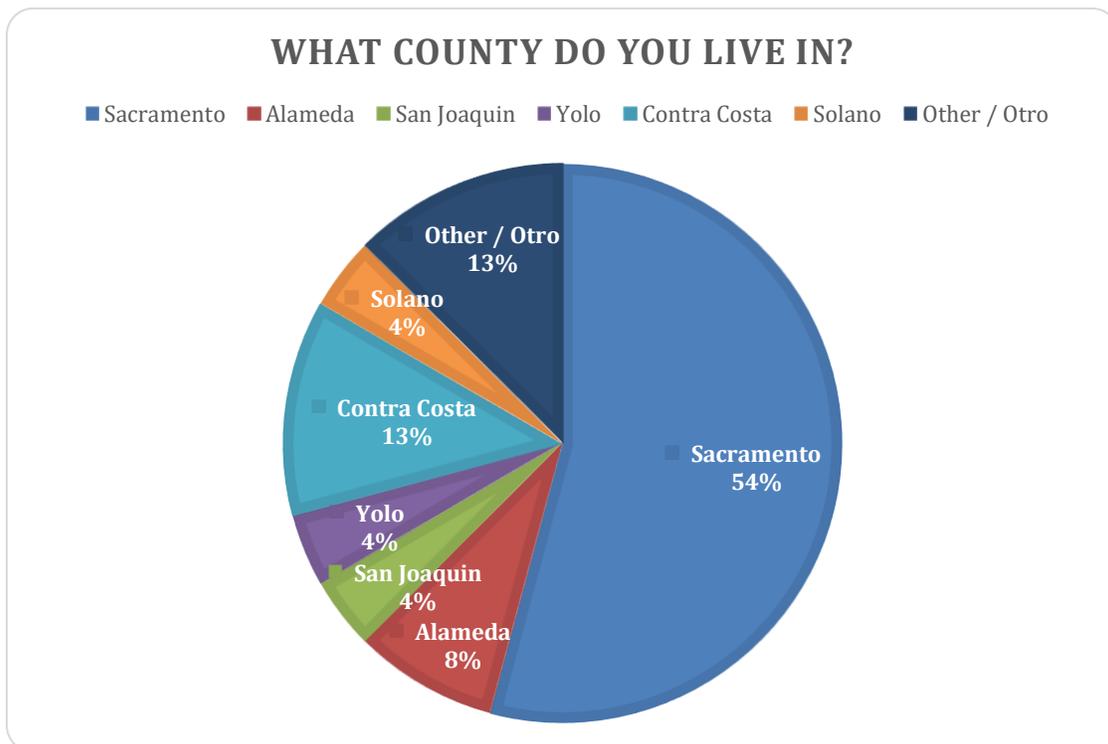


Meeting Synopsis

On April 14, 60 people attended the first Community Benefits Program Workshop (Workshop). Tony Estremera, Board of Directors, Valley Water, welcomed participants. Carrie Buckman, Environmental Program Manager, Department of Water Resources (DWR), reviewed how the Community Benefits Program fits into the Delta Conveyance Project and Janet Barbieri described the proposed Community Benefits Program.

DWR is proposing a Community Benefits Program for the Delta Conveyance Project. Background on the proposed program is available on the Delta Conveyance Project [website](#). This first Workshop focused on the concept, goals, and objectives of the Community Benefits Program. Participants provided input via Zoom polls, asking questions, and making suggestions. The Workshop concluded with dates for the next workshops and how DWR will use participant input to develop the Community Benefits Program Framework, which will be included as an appendix to the project's Draft Environmental Impact Report.

Workshop participants represented the following California Counties:



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This meeting summary paraphrases individual comments and suggestions from participants in the Community Benefits Program Workshop.

All materials are available to participants at the DWR [website](#).

*For questions, please contact the facilitator at DeltaConveyanceCBP@water.ca.gov
1-866-924-9955.*

Participant Welcome and Introductions

Tony Estremera, Board of Directors, Valley Water welcomed participants to the Workshop. He said he believes it is important for people within the Delta to be engaged throughout project planning, design, and construction. He noted that if the Delta Conveyance Project is approved, people across California will benefit from it and the local Delta community will bear the burden of construction impacts. Mr. Estremera explained that is why the participating public water agencies believe that it is crucial that DWR develop a community benefits program for the Delta Conveyance Project. Mr. Estremera concluded that public input helps all the agencies supporting the Delta Conveyance Project to understand what the community wants to see in a Community Benefits Program.

The facilitator, Juliana Birkhoff, said the objectives of the Workshop were to:

- Understand how the Community Benefits Program fits within the Delta Conveyance Project
- Ensure participants understand the Community Benefits Program
- Provide an opportunity for participants to provide input on:
 - What do you think about the community benefits concept?
 - What should the programs' purpose and objectives be?
 - What is your reaction to the proposed program components?
 - What do you think about the proposed categories of benefits?

The facilitator reviewed how to participate in English or Spanish in the meeting. She also explained how participants could provide input via Zoom polls, asking questions, and providing verbal and written input.

How the Community Benefits Program Fits into the Delta Conveyance Project

Carrie Buckman, Environmental Program Manager for the Delta Conveyance Project, DWR, presented the purpose of the Delta Conveyance Project. Ms. Buckman started by noting that State Water Project (SWP) infrastructure is aging. She explained how modernizing SWP infrastructure will restore and protect the future reliability of SWP water deliveries. Ms. Buckman outlined that the proposed project is designed to modernize the infrastructure in a cost-effective way and is consistent with California's Water Resilience Portfolio.

Ms. Buckman described the four Delta Conveyance Project objectives. These are:

- Address sea level rise and climate change
- Minimize water supply and disruption due to seismic risk
- Protect water supply reliability
- Provide operational flexibility to improve aquatic conditions

Ms. Buckman reviewed the location and facilities for the proposed project. She pointed out the proposed locations for intake facilities, tunnels, pumping plants, forebays, and the South Delta conveyance facilities.

Ms. Buckman also outlined the timeline for the proposed project, identifying the next major milestone as the release of a public review Draft Environmental Impact Report in early to mid-2022. A PDF version of the PowerPoint presentation and a link to the recorded workshop can be found at

<https://water.ca.gov/Programs/State-Water-Project/Delta-Conveyance/Community-Benefits-Program>

Ms. Buckman explained that the Community Benefits Program is part of DWR's approach to address impacts from Delta Conveyance Project construction and operations that are not addressed through traditional mitigation. She clarified that regulatory mitigation would address proposed project impacts based on requirements in environmental regulations. Ms. Buckman said the proposed Community Benefits Program would provide resources for direct benefits to communities most impacted by project implementation. She described the proposed ombudsman program as a program to provide information, explore complaints, and

provide compensation from potential unforeseen construction impacts. Taken together, DWR proposes the three processes to address community impacts.

Ms. Buckman finished her presentation by outlining five core commitments for the proposed community benefits program. She described the five commitments as:

1. Transparent: open process to collaborate effectively
2. Constructive: participation in good faith with community to create a positive legacy
3. Inclusive: broad stakeholder participation to expand capture of voices
4. Fair: benefits related to localized nature of effects
5. Unconditional: community benefits are not dependent on support for project

Community Benefits Program Overview and Public Input Polls

Janet Barbieri, a consultant to DWR and the Communications and Public Outreach Manager for the Delta Conveyance Project, reviewed proposed Community Benefits Program concepts, purpose, objectives, components, and categories. She explained that DWR proposed creating the Community Benefits Program to acknowledge:

- The direct project benefits are not located inside the Delta
- If the project is approved it could have potential adverse effects on the Delta through construction
- The limitations of typical environmental mitigation

Throughout her presentation, Ms. Barbieri asked participants to provide input via Zoom polls. Between 24 and 30 people participated in the polls.

Community Benefits Program Concept

Participants were asked to provide input on the Community Benefits Program concept through a Zoom poll. The poll asked participants to rank their opinions on a scale of 1-5, with one being strong dislike of the concept and five being strongly like the concept. Participants responded as follows:

What Do You Think of the Community Benefits Program as Proposed? Using a Scale of 1-5

Strongly Dislike / No Me Gusta Mucho el Concepto	1
Somewhat Dislike the Concept / Algo No Me Gusta del Concepto	1
Neutral on the Concept / Neutral en el Concepto	9
Somewhat Like the Concept / Me Gusta un Poco el Concepto	7
Strongly Like the Concept / Me Gusta Mucho el Concepto	5

Ms. Barbieri said that community benefits programs are common in large, infrastructure projects. She explained that they are a defined set of commitments made by project proponents created with the local community to create lasting, tangible, and potentially significant economic and social benefits to residents, businesses, and organizations facing potential project impacts.

Community Benefits Program Purpose and Objectives

The proposed purpose of the Community Benefits Program is to harness the Delta Conveyance Project to create benefits for the local Delta community. The objectives are:

- Provide a mechanism for the Delta community to identify opportunities for local benefits
- Provide a mechanism for the project proponents to demonstrate good faith, transparency, and accountability to the community through formal commitments developed with community input
- Protect and enhance the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place

Next, Workshop participants were asked: What do you think of the proposed purpose and objectives for the Community Benefits Program as presented? Using the Zoom poll, most participants said the purpose and objectives needed a lot of refinement (29%) or some refinement (42%). See the following chart.

What Do You Think of the Proposed Purpose and Objectives for the Community Benefits Program as Presented?

The proposed purpose and objectives need a lot of refinement / El propósito y los objetivos propuestos necesitan mucho refinamiento.	7
I do not have an opinion on the proposed purpose and objectives / No tengo opinión sobre el propósito y los objetivos propuestos.	4
The proposed purpose and objectives need some refinement / El propósito y los objetivos propuestos necesitan algunos refinamientos	10
The proposed purpose and objectives look good to me as is / El propósito y los objetivos propuestos me parecen bien tal como están	3

Community Benefits Program Components

Ms. Barbieri explained that DWR proposed two components to the Community Benefits Program. A community benefits program for the Delta Conveyance Project could involve several components of community benefits, depending on community input:

- Creating a fund to identify and implement projects to protect and preserve the unique cultural, recreational, agricultural, natural resource and economic values of the Delta
- Integrating benefits into Delta Conveyance Project implementation, including economic and infrastructure related benefits.
 - Economic development opportunities for the Delta community, could include education and training, jobs, and local business utilization commitments
 - Infrastructure related benefits could include potential multipurpose projects related to logistics and infrastructure (e.g., roads, utilities, emergency services) and ensuring input on site specific development (e.g., architecture and landscaping)

Ms. Barbieri asked the participants what they thought about these components. People responded to a Zoom poll, with most people saying the components needed a lot of refinement. See chart below:

What Do You Think of the Proposed Components as Presented (Creating A Fund and Identifying Implementation Commitments?)

The proposed purpose and objectives look good to me as is / El propósito y los objetivos propuestos me parecen bien tal como están	12
The proposed purpose and objectives look good to me as is / El propósito y los objetivos propuestos me parecen bien tal como están	1
The proposed purpose and objectives look good to me as is / El propósito y los objetivos propuestos me parecen bien tal como están	5
The proposed purpose and objectives look good to me as is / El propósito y los objetivos propuestos me parecen bien tal como están	3

Categories of Benefits

In the last section of Ms. Barbieri's presentation, participants were invited to comment on proposed benefit categories. DWR developed these benefit categories from the environmental justice survey, the community benefit interviews as well as other public input. The proposed benefit categories included:

- Natural resources
- Water quality
- Recreation
- Agriculture
- Culture and history
- Public safety and emergency response
- Economy
- Levee maintenance
- Education
- Land purchase and easements

The goal for the public to provide project ideas, types of projects, in each of the categories. The final Zoom poll asked participants for provide input on which three categories are most important to them. Participants noted that natural resources and water quality were important categories. They also ranked recreation, agriculture, and culture/history as important. See the following chart for more information.

Natural Resources/Recursos Naturales	14
Water Quality / Calidad del agua	12
Recreation / Recreación	9
Culture and History / Cultura e Historia	8
Agriculture / Agricultura	8
Public Safety and Emergency Response / Seguridad pública y respuesta a emergencias	5
Economy / Economía	4
Levee Maintenance / Mantenimiento de diques	2
Education / Educación	1
Land Purchase and Easements / Compra de terrenos y servidumbres	1

Participants also were asked to provide input on which three categories were least important to them. People shared that land purchase and easements, levee maintenance, and recreation were the least important to them. See the following chart for more details.

Land Purchase and Easements / Compra de terrenos y servidumbres	9
Levee Maintenance / Mantenimiento de diques	8
Recreation / Recreación	7
Public Safety and Emergency Response / Seguridad pública y respuesta a emergencias	5
Education/Educacion	5
Agriculture/Agricultura	4
Culture and History / Cultura e Historia	4
Economy / Economía	3
Natural Resources	1
Water Quality / Calidad del agua	1

Public Input: Questions and Feedback

Connection Between Delta Conveyance Project and Community Benefits Program

A participant asked if the Delta Conveyance Project does not go forward will there be a Community Benefits Program?

- Ms. Buckman responded that the Community Benefits Program is specifically a part of the Delta Conveyance Project. If the conveyance project does not move forward, this program would also not move forward.

Focus for Community Benefits Program?

A participant wondered what kind of projects could be funded by the proposed Community Benefits Program. Would the program only focus on elements related to design and construction components of the Delta Conveyance Project?

- Ms. Buckman responded that the Community Benefits Program could fund elements beyond design and construction. Direct impacts to the community from construction will be managed through traditional environmental mitigation.

Another participant asked what the focus area was for the Community Benefits Program. Will the Community Benefits Program just focus on the legal Delta or the larger Sacramento- San Joaquin River Delta?

- Ms. Buckman explained that the DWR has been focused on the whole Delta. If someone wanted benefits outside of the Delta, DWR would have to understand why it was important to fund with community benefits funds.

How Would the Community Benefits Program Be Funded and How Much Funding?

There were several questions and comments from participants about funding for the Community Benefits Program. A participant asked where the funding would come from for the Community Benefits Program. Another participant wondered if the DWR knew what percentage of the project would go to community benefits and what percentage to construction.

- Ms. Buckman responded that the Community Benefits Program would be funded as part of the Delta Conveyance Project. Funds will be part of the construction funding provided by the water agencies that participate in the project. Ms. Buckman explained that DWR did not yet know what percentage would go to community benefits or what the total amount would be as it is still very early in the program development process. She encouraged participants to see more information about project funding on the DWR website.

Another person wondered if funding were part of construction, would funding end when construction ends, or would community benefits be supported in a lump sum? A second person asked if there was a mechanism for long term or ongoing funding so that the community benefits could last as long as the project, not just construction?

- Ms. Buckman said that DWR planned to have a construction budget but has not identified how the community benefit funds would be timed with construction. She hoped that participants would provide input. She asked, for example, is it better to have a lump sum so the Community Benefits Program tackles larger projects or is it better to save funds and distribute them over time. She reminded participants that the DWR would appreciate input on how to time funds.

Traffic Congestion and Road Impacts

Several participants noted that they had concerns about traffic congestion and how additional trucks would affect the area. One person explained there is already a lot of truck traffic and with construction there will be more problems. Another person said many county roads were in horrible condition, almost impassable with paving. She worried that their condition would worsen with heavy trucks. A community benefits program could improve road conditions and build up these kinds of projects. She said that needs to be somehow integrated into one of the categories.

Another person said that traffic congestion and road conditions should be in the environmental mitigation, community benefits, and implementation commitments. This person explained they assumed the environmental mitigation would address traffic and road congestion. However, they said, Delta infrastructure is not set up for heavy vehicles. The impact would be extensive so community benefits could also address bridges and roadways. Traffic and deteriorated roads have safety, health, and traffic impacts.

Another person wondered if there was a way to use tunnels for traffic to divert traffic away from the Delta. Perhaps the tunnel could convey traffic as well. A participant suggested putting signs up on local roads and developing consequences for contractors who do not follow designated routes.

- Ms. Buckman assured participants that the amount of traffic and traffic safety would be important in project implementation. She also reminded participants that the Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority (DCA) has studied traffic and traffic safety through the design and engineering process and there was valuable information on the DCA website (<https://www.dcdca.org/>).

A participant worried that DWR was only addressing impacts to roads used for construction, and not impacts from the project on all the surrounding roads that residents use; roads that would be heavily used to get around the construction project. She stressed her concern that levees and roads would be impacted and destroyed by the project.

Fund New Facilities Parks and Recreation

A participant asked if the “leave behinds” mentioned in the concept paper could be facilities that could be repurposed for benefits for the community later. She also noted that funding should support new recreation facilities, parks, and other recreation areas, not just repurposed facilities.

Connections Between Environmental Mitigation and Community Benefits

There were several questions and concerns about environmental mitigation and community benefits. A person wondered if community benefits were part of mitigation or compensation for impacts from the tunnel?

- Ms. Buckman responded that the environmental impact report would analyze possible environmental impacts and propose measures to avoid, reduce, or minimize those effects. The Community Benefits Program does not replace environmental mitigation but can address other effects the communities might experience. Community benefits programs can provide additional resources to address community led priorities.

Another person said that to understand the Community Benefit Program, it would be helpful to know what the community impacts were in order to compare them to possible community benefits.

A participant explained that they were worried about seismic hazards and encouraged DWR to address earthquake risks to the Delta Conveyance infrastructure.

Ensure Program Accountability

A participant explained that people are not always satisfied with the results from community benefits programs. She wondered how DWR would ensure that community benefit projects would be completed? A participant worried that funding or commitment would run out before projects were completed.

A second participant said DWR had not fully listened to her concerns. She explained that she feels disregarded as she relates concerns about the Delta Conveyance Project. Since she has not felt heard so far, she does not trust that the Community Benefits program will provide community benefits fully. She explained that people would not want to participate in the Community Benefits Program because of their concerns about DWR listening.

- Ms. Buckman responded that DWR heard from the Environmental Justice (EJ) survey and the community benefits interviews that people were concerned about accountability. Ms. Buckman said DWR will demonstrate its accountability moving forward.
- Ms. Buckman explained that the Community Benefits Framework would include accountability measures and a structure to ensure potential community benefits projects met their goals and were completed. The third public Workshop will discuss how to develop an accountable community benefits structure. The Community Benefits Framework, which will be in the Environmental Impact Report, will include suggestions on how to organize the program.
- Ms. Buckman said in the next step DWR will work with the community—potentially with a community group still to be either formed or identified—to develop a process and a structure for the Community Benefits Program. She stressed that it was important to include the community in developing the structure. Whatever the structure is, DWR will make sure that measurability, tangibility, and accountability are accounted for in some way that makes sense to everyone involved.

Environmental Justice Survey

A participant asked how many people participated in the Delta Conveyance Project Environmental Justice Surveys.

- Ag Innovations responded that 2,177 people participated in the survey.

Changes to The Purpose and Objectives of the Community Benefits Program

Stakeholders

A participant asked how DWR defined a stakeholder in the Community Benefit Program purposes and objectives. He encouraged DWR to define a stakeholder clearly. Would the DWR define a broad stakeholder group? Would the stakeholder group develop organically? Would state agencies be stakeholders? He explained that there are people who live and work in the Delta who are not typically included, and that state agencies are not representative surrogates for these typically-unincluded residents. He encouraged DWR to develop a clear way to identify stakeholders and to include stakeholders who are not typically included.

Another person suggested that DWR could revise the concept, purpose, and objectives language to clarify who is a stakeholder. A participant suggested that it might be possible to have different categories or participation levels for residents versus other kinds of participants.

Community Benefits Concept, Purpose and Objectives

A participant commented that the concept and purpose only mention economic and social benefits to the Delta. She wants to make sure it is clear that there will be impacts and therefore a need to provide cultural, recreational, natural resources, and agriculture benefits. She acknowledged those were included in the benefit categories but wanted to make sure people understand the range of benefits.

Another person concurred and suggested considering all the project impacts. She suggested including language to include benefits for water quality, fish and wildlife early in the document.

Another commenter suggested that the objectives be broadened to include the potential for water supply benefits, and referenced previous iterations of delta conveyance proposals that had included local water supply options.

Community Input for Allocation

A participant acknowledged that there would be challenges to fairly and appropriately distributing benefits. The participant said it would help to take a step back to consider possible benefits from the community benefits program. Once all the benefit types are identified, then talk about allocation.

Another participant encouraged DWR to work with the right people to produce a mechanism. Provide public opportunities to debate the mechanism, and then discuss the benefit money in the budget that is available.

Community Benefits Program Components

A participant noted that “Delta as Place Fund” is an extremely awkward statement. She encouraged DWR to use different language. The participant explained that grassroots and local communities might be clearer than Delta as Place.

Project Implementation Commitments

A participant liked the project implementation commitments. She agreed that the project should commit to the people who will have the project in their backyards and affecting their roads. She said it was important to listen to how the construction and the project will affect people every day.

Several people suggested clarifying and explaining multi-purpose facilities.

- Ms. Buckman responded that multipurpose facilities meant the project would develop a construction facility that then would transition to a local use. For example, converting temporary construction spaces into public parks, turning over communications facilities or helicopter pads to the community. Facilities would be intentionally designed for community use in the future as well as project use.

A participant asked if project implementation commitments only related to construction. He wondered if all the hiring targets, labor, and local business utilization related only to project construction. The participant asked DWR to consider commitments not tied to construction, like those that could benefit school districts. He stressed that every school district in the Delta needed infrastructure improvements and repairs as well as site improvements. He stressed that there need to be commitments beyond design and construction.

Changes to the Community Benefits Program Fund Categories

A participant encouraged DWR to clarify natural resources and to include water quality as a fund category. She pointed out that water quality is an extremely important category for many people, and they are concerned about the impact of the project on water quality.

Next Steps

The facilitator explained that Ag Innovations would summarize participants ideas into a meeting summary and post it on the DWR website.

The facilitator explained that the next Workshop on May 6 will focus on project ideas for the Community Benefits Fund. Tribal members are invited to participate in a Workshop on May 17. The final community Workshop will be on May 25, focusing on implementation commitments and how the public should be involved in developing the program.

Information from the interviews, public workshops, emails to the program, and input from the comment forms will inform the Community Benefits Framework. The Framework will be included as an appendix in the Environmental Impact Report.