



## Delta Conveyance Project Ombudsman Program Overview

### I. Introduction

The purpose of the program is to establish an Ombudsman Office to serve as a resource for local Delta residents, businesses, community members, Environmental Justice (EJ) communities, local agencies, and Tribes to (1) ensure construction-related concerns or grievances are efficiently and fairly addressed and project transparency is sustained; (2) promote the streamlining of complaint resolutions; and (3) provide local community members with confidence that construction related issues and concerns will be quickly and fairly addressed and resolved to the extent practical. The Ombudsman will work with the construction and communication teams to help ensure proactive public information and community awareness to avoid and minimize local inconveniences, surprises, or misunderstandings. The Ombudsman will facilitate connection to staff who have the authority to quickly investigate and resolve issues.

#### Mission:

Promote fairness and accountability in the delivery of the Delta Conveyance Project by ensuring prompt and clear communication, facilitating the resolution of concerns, and providing review of the process for resolution of grievances.

#### Expected Outcomes:

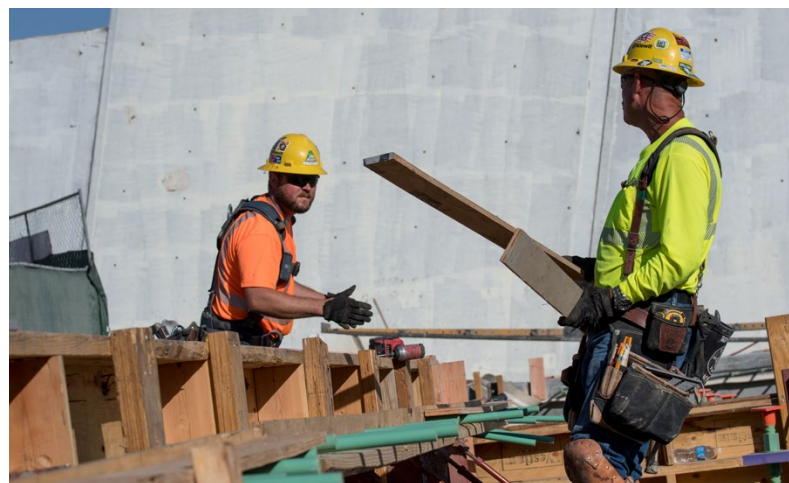
A transparent and accountable construction project that addresses the needs of residents, businesses, other community members, EJ communities, local agencies, and Tribes, administered by an Ombudsman to minimize conflict, provide a forum to resolve concerns and grievances, and build trust among interested parties.

#### Scope and Timing:

The work of the Ombudsman Office will focus on community impact, environmental concerns, and the specific needs of EJ communities and Tribes. It is expected that the Ombudsman Program will launch during the final phase of project permitting and preliminary design, to be ready as soon as implementation commences, and that the Ombudsman's office would be stood up, open, visible, available and fully functional in the period prior to the start of construction.

### Key Features:

- The Ombudsman will have access to leadership and will be integrated into the highest levels of program planning and implementation to ensure full program awareness and seamless communication.
- The Ombudsman will work closely with construction liaisons and contractors to triage complaints and concerns.
- The Ombudsman will also work closely with the project communications team to ensure consistency in public information.
- The program will be focused on responsiveness, speed, and communication. The Ombudsman Office will be accessible to the public, will keep complainants informed at every step, and will work to resolve issues quickly.
- A key tenet of the program is that the Ombudsman be objective and fair.
- The Ombudsman will make observations, findings and recommendations to help the organization improve administrative processes, transparency, fairness and communication. The DCA Executive Director or designee, and Board of Directors, retain implementation authorities.
- The Ombudsman will keep detailed records and make public reports to track claims and resolutions and to ensure transparency and accountability.
- **Relationship to Accountability Action Plan:** the Ombudsman Program is one element of the overall Accountability Action Plan, with the others being Community Benefits, Regulatory Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting, Community Advisory Groups, and project communications. The Program will have communication responsibilities adjacent to overall project communications and will coordinate with the Communications Manager and team to ensure consistency.



# Delta Conveyance Project

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## II. Program Objectives

- Build trust across diverse parties—general community, EJ communities, and Tribes—through proactive engagement and responsiveness.
- Provide an accessible platform for all affected parties to raise issues or complaints, with tailored outreach to EJ communities and Tribes.
- Collaborate with the DCA's Environmental Compliance Subcommittee to ensure compliance with legal, environmental, and public commitments, including those tied to EJ and Tribal agreements.
- Offer recommendations to the DCA Executive Director to help improve project management and relations with interested parties.

## III. Key Staff

- Lead Ombudsman, with expertise in public administration, conflict resolution, infrastructure development, and familiarity and competency in EJ and Tribal issues.
- Community liaisons, field reps, including EJ and Tribal specialists, and administrative personnel, all chosen for impartiality and sensitivity to interested party needs.

## IV. Key Functions and Responsibilities

### Complaint Handling

- Receive concerns or complaints via phone, email, online form, or in-person, and log the matter for ongoing tracking and reporting.
- Conduct a preliminary review to screen and confirm that the complaint is directly related to the Delta Conveyance Project and assess urgency.
- Investigate and address the matter, working with the construction manager under the authority or delegated authority of the DCA Executive Director.
- Establish clear timelines for response.
- Resolution Pathways
  - Informal resolution of complaints (e.g., clarifying misunderstandings).
  - Formal resolution of claims or facilitate the resolution of claims.
- The Ombudsman will track the progress toward resolution and will serve as the single point of contact for the party submitting the complaint/claim, providing updates regularly.
- Document resolution and provide regular reports to the DCA Board of Directors.
- Maintain confidentiality to safeguard sensitive information related to the project, complaints, or parties involved.

### Party Engagement

- Eligibility: Complaint resolution is open to all affected by the project—residents, businesses, EJ communities, Tribes, NGOs or others recreating or using facilities nearby construction locations. General inquiries about the project will be forwarded to the communications team.
- Engage affected parties primarily through one-on-one discussions, but potentially with occasional community meetings to maintain transparency and responsiveness.
- Maintain a dedicated hotline, email, and online portal, supplemented by culturally appropriate outreach (e.g., materials in relevant languages for EJ communities and staff with multi-lingual abilities).
- Coordinate with project communications team to ensure consistency in outward facing public information and other communications. Be able to answer questions from the public and be prepared to refer to the communications team for any matters that are more complicated or outside of their area of expertise.

### Monitoring and Oversight

- Perform site visits and review project reports to ensure compliance with commitments to all parties, including EJ or Tribal-specific mitigation measures and agreements.
- Focus on agency accountability and impacts on interested parties, particularly historically underserved groups.

### Reporting

- Issue annual public reports summarizing complaints, resolutions, and recommendations, with dedicated sections on EJ and Tribal concerns.
- Provide monthly updates to the DCA Board of Directors (or board committee).

## V. Budget and Resources

- Funding: Prior to initiation of construction activities the DCA Executive Director or designee will allocate a dedicated budget from the project's overall funding.
- Resources: Office space, staff, technology for case management, and culturally appropriate outreach materials.
- Scalability: Adjust staffing based on inquiry volume and diversity of affected parties.

## VI. Performance Metrics

- Number and types of inquiries received and resolved.
- Average time to resolution.
- Party satisfaction ratings.
- Number and type of recommendations implemented.
- Financial tracking (program budget, actuals, incurred).

