

PARADISE CUT BYPASS EXPANSION AND MULTI-BENEFIT PROJECT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Paradise Cut Bypass Expansion and Multi-Benefit Project (Project) will improve flood protection for local communities, restore habitat, and increase water supply reliability in southwest San Joaquin County, including the southern portion of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The San Joaquin Area Flood Control Agency (SJAFCA) is leading development of the Paradise Cut Bypass Expansion and Multi-Benefit Project Feasibility Study (Paradise Cut Feasibility Study) in partnership with the California Department of Water Resources, the Central Valley Flood Protection Board, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy, an Advisory Committee, reclamation districts, and other partners. The Paradise Cut Feasibility Study will identify the preferred Project alternative. SJAFCA started the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study in 2024 and will complete it in 2026.

Q1: What are the benefits of the Project to local communities and the environment?

A: The Project will expand the Paradise Cut Bypass adjacent to the San Joaquin River to create hundreds of acres of additional floodplain during high flows, providing additional flood protection for local communities and restoring habitat for wildlife such as the Swainson's hawk, riparian brush rabbit, and riparian songbirds. The Project also will permanently protect agricultural land in the expanded floodplain and restore channels critical to sustaining agricultural water supply by removing accumulated sediment. The Project will lower flood stage from one-half foot to three feet, depending on the location, along the urban portions of the San Joaquin River in Stockton, Lathrop, and Manteca, as well as the rural areas immediately upstream of Paradise Cut. The Project will protect millions of dollars of property, including homes, critical infrastructure, and farmland. The Project is included in the State of California's Central Valley Flood Protection Plan and the Delta Plan, as well as the Central Valley Flood Protection Board's Systemwide Investment Strategy.

Q2: What work on the Project has already been completed?

A: The San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District completed Phase 1 (2016-2019) and Phase 2 (2020-2022) of the Project in partnership with the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy, the South Delta Water Agency, the California Department of Water Resources, American Rivers, reclamation districts, and other interested parties. In 2022, Phase 1 and Phase 2 partners chose SJAFCA to serve as the lead agency for Phase 3, the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study. In Phase 1, partners completed conceptual planning and developed a permitting strategy. During Phase 2, partners determined existing and

needed studies and established a local engagement structure. Phase 1 and Phase 2 resulted in the following outcomes:

Phase 1 Deliverables:

- Paradise Cut Existing Conditions Technical Memorandum
- Development and Calibration of CVFED Based Lower San Joaquin River HEC-RAS model, Paradise Cut Modeling Plan, and Paradise Cut Run Catalog
- Conceptual Design Technical Memo
- Technical Memorandum
- Paradise Cut Expansion Project Brochure
- Restoration Opportunities Analysis
- Environmental Compliance & Permitting Strategy

Phase 2 Deliverables:

- Paradise Cut Conservation and Flood Management Project Phase 2 Local Engagement Strategy
- 2023 Memorandum of Understanding
- Existing and Needed Technical Studies
- Avoidance, Mitigation, Monitoring and Maintenance Strategies Report

Q3: What is the status of the Project?

A: SJAFCA executed a contract with the California Department of Water Resources to develop the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study in 2023. Work started in May 2024 and is expected to conclude in 2026.

Q4: Is the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study separate from the Lathrop and Manteca Feasibility Study?

A: Yes. The Paradise Cut Feasibility Study is separate from the Lathrop and Manteca Feasibility Study led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the Reclamation District 17/Mossdale Tract area. For more information on the Lathrop and Manteca Feasibility Study, please visit SJAFCA's [webpage](#) for the study.

Q5: How long will it take SJAFCA to complete the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study?

A: SJAFCA will complete the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study in 2026 and deliver it to the California Department of Water Resources.

Q6: What are the main deliverables of the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study?

A: The Paradise Cut Feasibility Study will evaluate potential alternatives to expand the Paradise Cut Bypass, restore capacity in South Delta channels to increase water supply reliability, and increase habitat for species of state and local importance. The main Paradise Cut Feasibility Study deliverables are: 1) Draft Alternative Formulation and



Screening Technical Memorandum (April/May 2025); 2) Evaluation and Comparison of Alternatives Memo (August/September 2025); 3) Draft Feasibility Report (September/October 2025); and 4) Final Feasibility Report (December 2025). SJAFCA will accept public comments on the first three deliverables both in writing and verbally at Advisory Committee meetings.

Q7: How is the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study funded?

A: The California Department of Water Resources partnered with SJAFCA to provide \$3 million for the feasibility study.

Q8: How will SJAFCA make decisions associated with the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study?

A: SJAFCA and local reclamation districts signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2023 creating an Advisory Committee to ensure local agency input to the SJAFCA Board of Directors and the California Department of Water Resources during the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study process. The Advisory Committee includes one representative from American Rivers (a non-profit environmental organization), one representative from the City of Tracy, four representatives from RDs (including a representative from RD 1/2/544/2089, a representative from RD 1007/2058, a representative from RD 2095, and a representative from RD 2062), one representative from the South Delta Water Agency, and one representative from SJAFCA. The California Department of Water Resources, the Central Valley Flood Protection Board, and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy each have one non-voting representative on the Advisory Committee as well. Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public. SJAFCA also created a Technical Review Panel to provide input on technical deliverables associated with the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study and convened the Paradise Cut Management Team with key interested parties to provide additional review of important deliverables. The Project Decision Recommendation Framework on SJAFCA's Project [webpage](#) provides more information about the decision-making process.

Q9: Who makes the final decision regarding the preferred alternative?

A: SJAFCA expects to have a collaborative discussion about the preferred alternative with the Advisory Committee, the California Department of Water Resources, the Central Valley Flood Protection Board, and other interested parties, but ultimately the SJAFCA Board of Directors will vote to approve the final Paradise Cut Feasibility Study, including the preferred alternative. As the primary funding agency, the California Department of Water Resource also must approve the final Paradise Cut Feasibility Study.

Q10: What is the best way to learn more about the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study?

A: SJAFCA encourages interested parties to attend public Advisory Committee meetings and workshops, as well as visit the SJAFCA [webpage](#) with Project information, including

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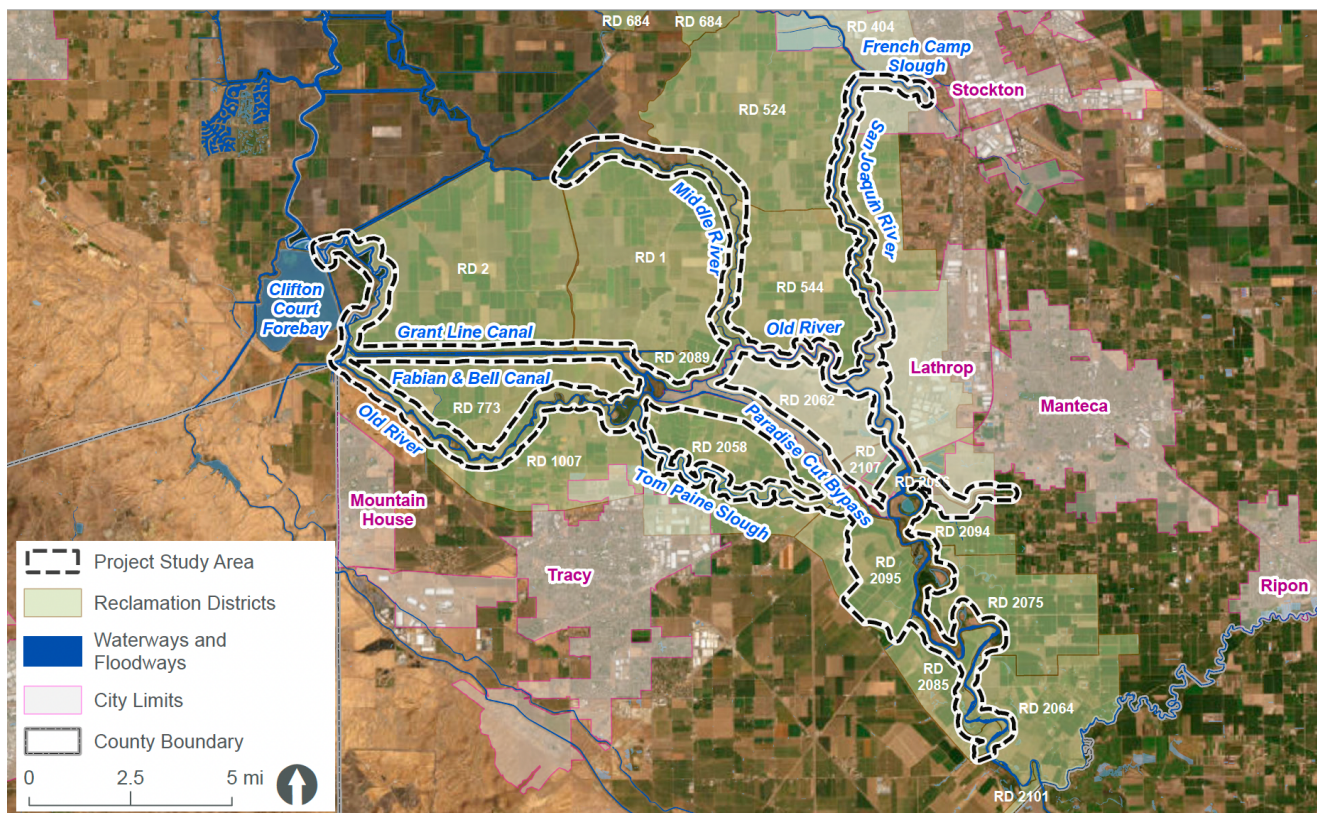
Advisory Committee materials. Upcoming Advisory Committee meetings are: April 21, 2025; August 25, 2025; September 22, 2025; and December 15, 2025. SJAFCA also will host two public workshops, one in September/October 2025 and another in December 2025.

Q11: Does the Project include dredging?

A: All conceptual Project alternatives under evaluation in the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study include dredging. Dredging is referred to as “channel restoration,” “restoring capacity of South Delta channels” and “improving irrigation intake reliability and waterway navigability” in public outreach materials. The Paradise Cut Feasibility Study alternatives will evaluate the costs and benefits of proposed channel restoration alternatives, along with the long-term costs to maintain restored channels.

Q12: Which South Delta channels are proposed for channel restoration, also known as dredging?

A: The map below shows the Project study area. SJAFCA will study potential channel restoration in the study area, specifically Middle River, Old River (West, South, East, Side Channel), Fabian and Bell Canal, Paradise Cut Bypass and Tom Paine Slough. SJAFCA will provide information about potential channel restoration alternatives in draft documents released in 2025.



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Q13: Does dredging improve flood risk?

The Paradise Cut Feasibility Study is not modeling the isolated impacts of channel restoration on improving flood risk. The San Joaquin Resource Conservation District concluded as part of the previous phase of the Project that while dredging (i.e. channel restoration) does minimally contribute to reducing peak flood stages downstream of Paradise Cut, dredging would not likely be sufficient to mitigate hydraulic impacts to downstream landowners. Hydraulic mitigation would therefore still be needed to offset increases in flood stage due to the diversion of more water into Paradise Cut and the downstream tributaries. The primary benefit of the Project's proposed dredging is restoration of historic channel depths to benefit water supply.

Q14: Does SJAFCA have funding for construction of the Project?

A: No. The Paradise Cut Feasibility Study is intended to provide interested parties with a more realistic picture of the potential alternatives, constraints, and costs. SJAFCA will work with the California Department of Water Resources and signatories to the 2022 Memorandum of Understanding to identify potential funding if interested parties and the State can agree on a preferred alternative.

Q15: How much is the Project anticipated to cost?

A: Cost will depend on the preferred alternative selected and the construction timing. SJAFCA will provide high level (10%) cost estimates as part of the evaluation of each alternative in the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study.

Q16: Who will pay for the Project?

A: If interested parties can agree on a preferred alternative, SJAFCA or another lead agency (SJAFCA has only agreed to lead the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study phase) may request funding from state and federal agencies for construction, operation, and maintenance of the Project. Local agencies may need contribute local funding, otherwise known as a local cost share. The Project will require sufficient local, state, and federal funding for design and environmental work, construction, operation, and maintenance to move forward. Phase 4 will include a robust analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to determine the details of the final alternative.

Q17: Has a local or state agency agreed to maintain the Project, including ongoing dredging?

A: No. This discussion will occur as part of the Paradise Cut Feasibility Study process.

Q18: Will the Project harm salmon and other native fish?

A: The Project will not harm salmon and other native fish populations. The existing Paradise Cut Bypass is activated approximately every five years. The expanded Paradise Cut Bypass created by the Project will not inundate more frequently than the existing Bypass but will inundate a larger area of land. The existing Paradise Cut Bypass overtops in approximately 20% of all years and subsequent adult salmon returns are much higher three years later when juveniles born on the floodplain in these wet years return as adults to spawn. This positive correlation between high flows and increased salmon populations is linked to at least three factors: 1) increased floodplain rearing habitat in wet years; 2) reduced entrainment at the Delta pumps when the ratio of Delta inflow to Delta pumping is high; 3) potentially reduced temperatures in wet years; and 4) potentially lower predation due to the lower density of predators to inundated area. Expanding the Paradise Cut Bypass will not significantly change any of these wet year factors that lead to higher juvenile recruitment, therefore the Project will not harm salmon and other native fish. The Project also will not increase entrainment of juvenile salmon or other native fish at the state and federal pumping facilities along Old River because entrainment is less of a problem during high flows.

