

# **Working For a Delta Trail System**

**By Federal Glover**

The Delta, where the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers meet and mix before draining into San Francisco Bay is one of the great water wonderlands in the nation.

Yet, if you don't own a boat, it is one of the state's greatest secrets. Relatively few Californians know of its existence and the important role it plays in the state. There are even a few people who live in East County who have never been down to the water.

It wasn't always that way. The rivers and Delta was one of the prime reasons riverfront towns were located where they were. It was the chief means of transporting goods and people. Pittsburg had a commercial fishing industry that plied the waters until the 1950s when commercial fishing was banned. Naturally, the fish canneries closed down and hundreds of jobs were lost.

Many kids growing up in the shoreline communities of Pittsburg, Antioch and Oakley spent many summer hours fishing off the shore or swimming in its waters.

This great natural resource deserves better and that is why I introduced a resolution for the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors to support SB 1556, a bill sponsored by Sen. Tom Torlakson and co-authored by Assemblymember Lois Wolk.

Part of the reason that the Delta has gone virtually unnoticed is that there are few opportunities for the ordinary citizen to interact with it unless you own a boat or personal watercraft. The Delta shorelines, for the most part, are in private ownership or blocked off by industry.

It is a complicated and fragile ecosystem that needs the appreciation and protection of future generations of Californians

The California Delta provides two-thirds of the state's drinking and irrigation water which flows through the Delta's thousands of miles of waterways, levees, and shorelines; The Delta is a key part of the Pacific Flyway, and its rich ecosystem is home to thousands of unique birds, fish, animals and plants, enjoyed by out-door enthusiasts, water-sport fans, hunters, fishermen and naturalists.

It is critical habitat to numerous endangered or threatened species including the Lange's metalmark butterfly found in the Antioch and the Delta smelt and the Delta's waterways and wetlands is a major feeding ground on the flyway for the numerous migratory birds.

The sheer physical beauty of the Delta is hard to beat. It is characterized by its winding waterways amid islands (some with no names), levee-top roadways, historic towns such as Locke, Elk Grove, Sacramento, Antioch and Pittsburg, idyllic marinas, hidden beaches

and riparian oak groves. Houseboaters like to anchor in the Delta's quiet harbors and watch glorious sunsets from their rooftop decks.

Despite its size, there are only 22 public recreation areas in the Delta region, providing fishing, park day use, campgrounds, trails and boating access which support numerous recreational activities including boating, water skiing, jet skiing, windsurfing, sailing, fishing, relaxing, hiking and jogging, swimming, picnicking, and cycling.

The Delta Protection Commission survey have found that there are unmet recreational needs for the Delta region including trails for hiking and cycling, facilities for wildlife observation and education, water sports access, and bank fishing areas, including parking and trash pick-up, and improved historic and cultural sites with interpretive information. A multi-use trail including bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian along the Delta would provide a great link for the people of California to one of our most precious resources. It could provide a great link between our fascinating Delta communities and historic agricultural lands, foster a connection between our rich histories and our present challenges, and stimulate local tourism.

Torlaxon's Great California Delta Trail, would link with the San Francisco Bay Trail system to the present and future trail ways in Contra Costa, San Joaquin, Solano, Sacramento and Yolo counties.

Development plans for Oakley's shoreline, which includes the Delta Science Center, Pittsburg's, Antioch's and Bay Point's waterfront plans, as well as parts of the East Bay Regional Park System would be included as part of the trail and perhaps.

Hopefully, those communities will join the county to lend what support they can to this worthwhile project.

*Glover is the County Supervisor for District 5. Reach him at [dist5@bos.cccounty.us](mailto:dist5@bos.cccounty.us)*