



BDCP: EXPANDING SANDHILL CRANE HABITAT



The Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) includes conservation actions for 56 plant and wildlife species, including the Greater Sandhill Crane, believed to be one of the world’s oldest bird species. Thousands of Sandhill Cranes winter in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta), roosting in shallow wetlands and flooded fields, and foraging on nearby farmlands. Because the cranes forage almost entirely on privately-owned agricultural lands,

expanded efforts to protect these lands are essential to ensure that suitable habitat remains available in the Delta.

The BDCP seeks to restore and protect approximately 150,000 acres of habitat during its 50-year term. These restoration efforts include biological goals and objectives to address the needs of migratory birds, including the Greater Sandhill Crane.

TUNNEL ROUTE: PRESERVING CRANE HABITAT

Refinements to the proposed water delivery facilities have been introduced to minimize dislocation or disturbance of the Greater Sandhill Crane. The combined actions of realigning the proposed tunnels and moving the intermediate forebay create additional restoration opportunities for the Greater Sandhill Crane.

Recent changes to the proposed project reduce impacts on Sandhill Crane roosting and foraging habitat. BDCP implementation would result in a net permanent gain of at least 595 acres of roosting habitat, with at least 180 acres of new habitat in the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Project Boundary.

Crane habitat continues to be reduced through circumstances outside of BDCP (such as crop selection). The BDCP would enhance or protect 7,300 acres of crane habitat, and would substantially increase the value of crane foraging habitat on protected lands. The net increase in roosting habitat, and the increase in area and value of protected foraging habitat are expected to protect and expand crane populations within their winter range in the Plan area.

The BDCP Biological Goals and Objectives for Greater Sandhill Crane have been updated to include higher habitat targets. Additionally, avoidance and minimization measures are included in the BDCP to reduce indirect effects on the Greater Sandhill Crane, including:

- ▶ **Maintaining flooded cornfields and managing lands in the vicinity of crane roosting and foraging habitat, prior to and during construction, to encourage cranes to remain in the vicinity**
- ▶ **Minimizing construction-related disturbances to the extent practicable in the vicinity of crane roost sites during the winter, when cranes are present**
- ▶ **Placing barriers between construction activities and crane roost sites to reduce noise and visual effects**
- ▶ **Relocating and marking power lines and other facilities to minimize effects on cranes and their habitat to the extent practicable**

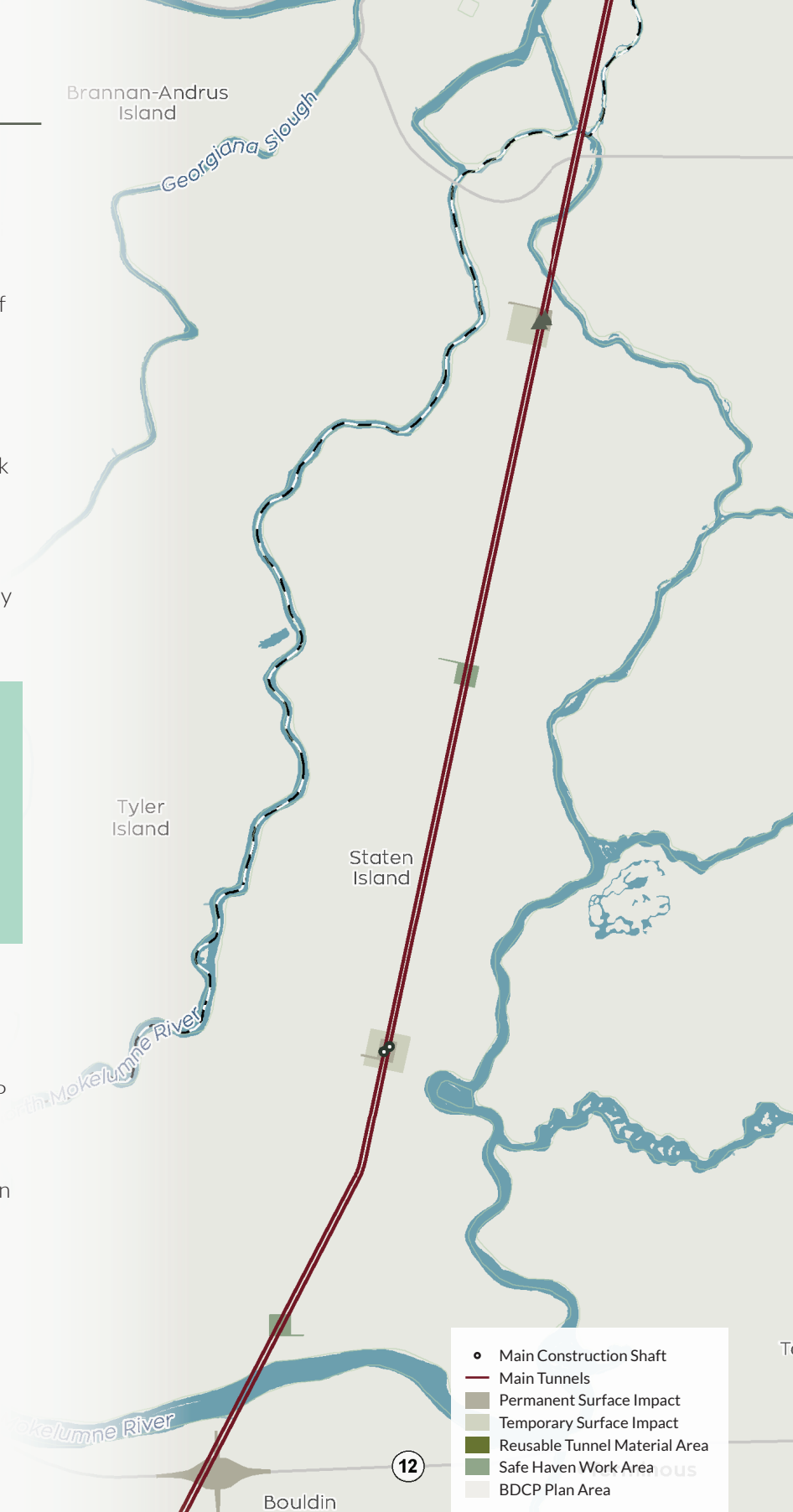
PROTECTING STATEN ISLAND

Staten Island, managed for the benefit of wildlife, is a favorite stop for Sandhill Cranes and a popular spot for birdwatchers. Approximately 33 percent of the Greater Sandhill Crane population that winters in the Delta roosts on Staten Island, making it one of the most important Sandhill Crane wintering sites in the Delta. The public roadways near and on the island are popular spots for watching the cranes make their daily return to nests from fields where they forage. BDCP proponents will continue to work with stakeholders to create a final tunnel alignment and manage construction and operations in a way that minimizes disruptions to roosting and foraging habitat, while protecting and enhancing bird-friendly farming practices.

In addition to the 2013 alignment changes, 2014 engineering changes would reduce the project footprint on Staten Island to less than 100 acres (permanent and temporary) - **a 92 percent reduction.**

This is accomplished by moving the reusable tunnel material disposal site off Staten Island and reducing anticipated construction impacts. To ensure the crane population is unharmed by construction, BDCP commits to a “performance standard” of no net loss of cranes on Staten Island. This standard would be achieved through specific avoidance and minimization measures.

Expanded habitat included in the BDCP’s habitat restoration conservation measures is expected to result in a long-term net benefit to Sandhill Crane roosting habitat.



No final decisions have been made regarding going forward with the BDCP or in selecting an alternative; those decisions will only occur after the completion of the CEQA and NEPA processes. The final alignment will incorporate stakeholder input to maximize agriculture productivity and minimize impact to migratory bird habitat, including Sandhill Crane habitat.

