

# False Creek Levee

Contra Costa County, CA

## HISTORY

As of early 2015, the three year old California drought was the worst in recorded history. Several years of a persistent high pressure ridge in the western Pacific Ocean had blocked storms from reaching California in the winter, when the state typically gets most of its moisture.

NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that a record-breaking rise in temperatures added to a warmer and drier climate. When coupled with the lack of rain, the drought conditions worsened, threatening water quality and fish migration, as well as recreational and agricultural systems.

A report from the University of California, Davis projected that the drought cost the California economy upwards of \$2.7 billion for the year 2015. Much of that pain was felt in the state's huge farming industry, which had been forced to idle a half-million acres and saw valuable crops like almond trees and grape vines die.

The California Department of Water Resources continuously works to protect the water supply in order to preserve fresh drinking water, farming requirements, and environmental needs, while supporting recreational activities as well.

## PROBLEM

The False Creek river area, located between Jersey and Bradford Islands in Contra Costa County, was an area of concern for the Department of Water Resources (DWR). Due in part to poor soils at its foundation, the levee area was at risk during seismic events. Additionally, the drought lowered river levels allowed salt water from San Francisco Bay to push upstream and contaminate valuable fresh water.

This delta region is very important and provides fresh water to over 26 million



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– Paul Marshall, Chief of Department of Water Reserve, Bay-Delta Office

Californians, including residents of the Delta and Contra Costa, Alameda, and Santa Clara counties. Besides providing fresh drinking water to the area, the river also supports the infrastructure, agricultural, and recreational activities of the region.

After the fourth year of drought, the agency gained approval to install a barrier, which preserved the existing limited water supply in upstream reservoirs that otherwise would

have been released to help block incoming tides of saltwater from the San Francisco Bay.

Paul Marshall, chief of DWR's Bay-Delta Office, said the barrier achieved DWR's goals during this persistent drought. “The barrier worked by preventing salinity to reach the central Delta,” he said. “We were able to save about 90,000 acre-feet in upstream reservoirs for the last quarter of 2015 and for fish releases.”

