

Berkeley Rausser

College of Natural Resources

Iryna Dronova, PhD, Associate Professor
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE, POLICY, AND MANAGEMENT

Date: March 24, 2026

Dear Assemblymember Wilson and Senator Cabaldon,

I am writing as a research scientist and professor at the University of California, Berkeley to express my strong support for State of California funding to enable the acquisition and restoration of Jersey Island in the western Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta.

My research focuses on monitoring of wetlands in the Delta and their ecosystem functions, including carbon sequestration, and the role that land management practices play in either exacerbating or mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. Decades of traditional agriculture on Delta islands have resulted in substantial historic emissions, which urgently call for holistic strategies towards region-wide restoration and management.

Jersey Island exemplifies this need. Historic management for cattle ranching and traditional agriculture resulted in persistent carbon loss, where parts of the island are now almost 20 feet below sea level. This is placing significant strain on the island's levees, leading to potential long-term instability. Restoring Jersey Island represents a highly promising opportunity to implement a proven, nature-based solution and to develop a blueprint for similar practices over the whole region. Large projects like Jersey Island are particularly valuable for informing such regional practices as they allow for the application of these strategies at a scale that can produce meaningful climate and ecosystem benefits.

In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, wetland restoration provides important co-benefits, including improved habitat for native species, enhanced water quality, and increased resilience to sea level rise. These outcomes underscore the importance of advancing projects that integrate climate mitigation with broader ecosystem restoration goals.

This project represents an opportunity to apply a research-driven solution to one of California's most pressing environmental challenges. I ask for your support of this proposed acquisition and restoration of Jersey Island.

Sincerely,
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CC:

Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee Chairman Laird
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee Chairwoman Gomez Reyes
Assembly Budget Committee Chairman Gabriel
Assembly Budget Subcommittee Chairman Bennett
Senator McNerney, Delta Caucus Co-chair
Natural Resources Agency Secretary Crowfoot
Wildlife Conservation Board Executive Director Norris
Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Executive Officer Ingram