

# Staff Report 32

**APPLICANT:**

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Katherine J. Davis

**PROPOSED ACTION:**

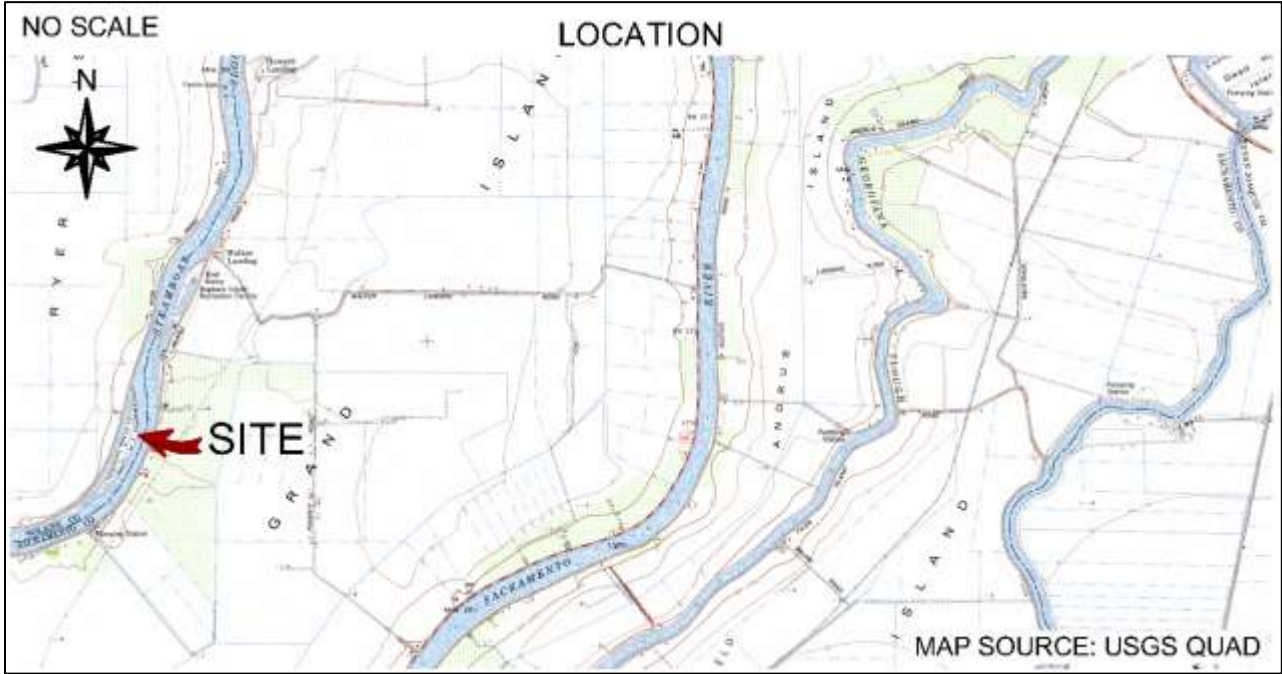
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Issuance of a General Lease – Recreational and Protective Structure Use.

**AREA, LAND TYPE, AND LOCATION:**

Sovereign land located in Steamboat Slough, adjacent to 3426 Snug Harbor Drive, on Ryer Island, near Walnut Grove, Solano County (as shown in Figure 1).

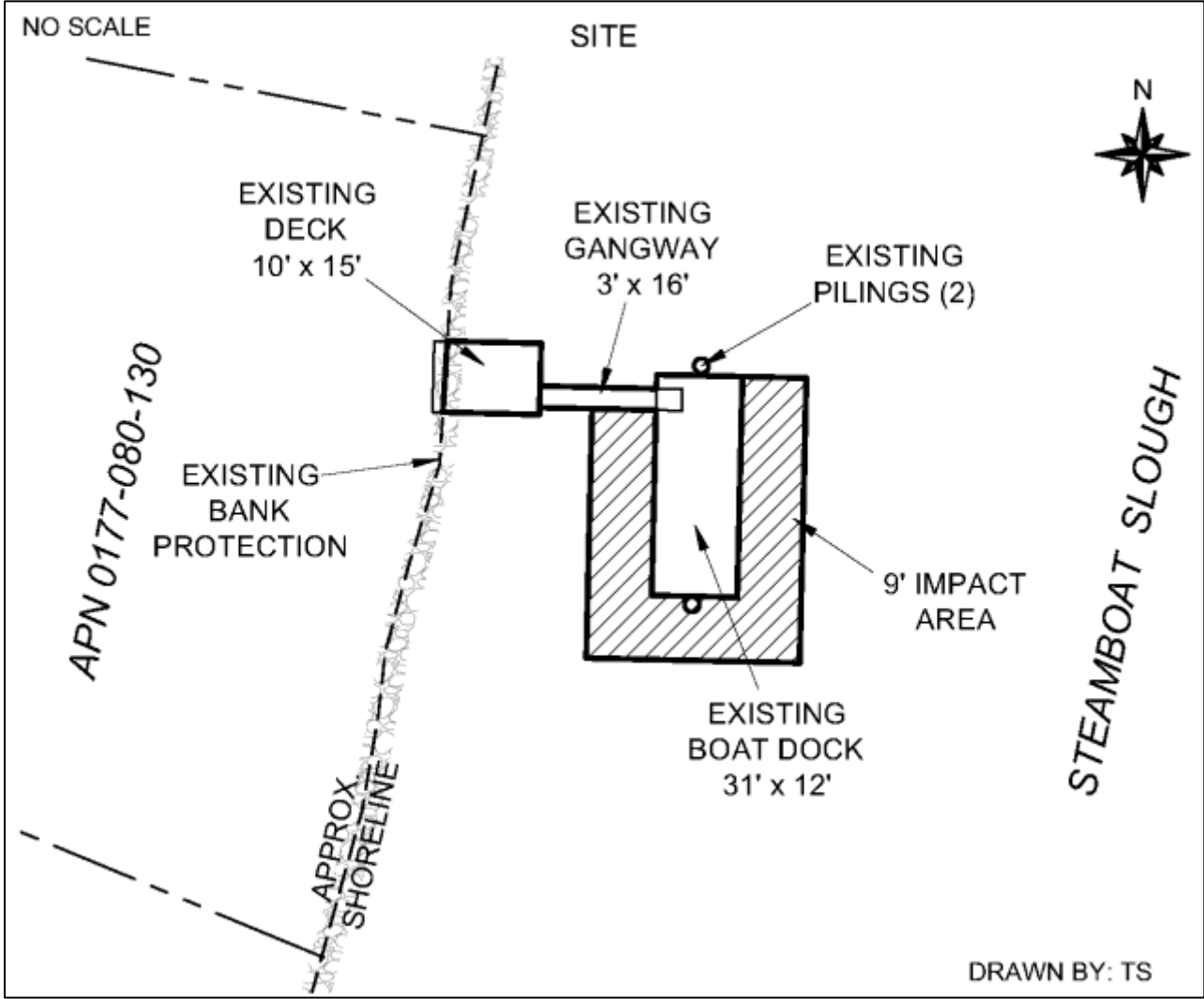
**Figure 1. Location**



**AUTHORIZED USE:**

Use of an existing deck, boat dock with appurtenant facilities, and bank protection (as shown in Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Site Map**



NOTE: This depiction of the lease premises is based on unverified information provided by the Applicant or other parties and is not a waiver or limitation of any State interest in the subject or any other property.

**TERM:**

10 years, beginning February 20, 2026.

**CONSIDERATION:**

\$465 per year, with an annual Consumer Price Index adjustment.

**SPECIFIC LEASE PROVISIONS:**

- Lessee agrees the provisions of Section 3, Paragraph 11 shall also extend to the period of Lessee's unauthorized occupation of State-owned lands, from February 20, 2025 to April 6, 2026.

**STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:**

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**AUTHORITY:**

Public Resources Code sections 6005, 6216, 6301, 6321, 6321.2, 6501.1, 6503, 6503.5, and 6505.5; California Code of Regulations, title 2, sections 2000 and 2003.

**PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:**

On June 29, 2015, the Commission authorized issuance of a General Lease – Recreational and Protective Structure Use to Katherin J. Davis for the continued use and maintenance of an existing wood deck, uncovered floating boat dock, gangway, two wood pilings, and bank protection ([Item 48](#)). That lease expired on February 19, 2025. Holdover Rent for the existing improvements (deck, boat dock, appurtenant facilities and bank protection) in the amount of \$254.19 has been paid through February 19, 2027.

The Applicant is now applying for a General Lease – Recreational and Protective Structure Use for an existing deck, boat dock with appurtenant facilities, and bank protection.

The lease will require the Applicant to indemnify the State for the entire period of unauthorized occupation, from February 20, 2025 to April 6, 2026, ensuring the State is protected.

The subject facilities are located directly waterward of the upland property and occupy a relatively small area of the river. The proposed lease will not interfere with navigation or substantially interfere with any Public Trust needs at this time or for the term of the lease.

The boat dock and appurtenant facilities serve to facilitate recreational boating. Recreational boating is a water dependent use that is generally consistent with the common law Public Trust Doctrine. The California Legislature has identified private recreational boating facilities as an authorized use of Public Trust land. (Pub. Resources Code, § 6503.5).

The bank protection will mutually benefit both the public and the Applicant. The bank of Steamboat Slough will have additional protection from wave action provided at no extra cost to the public. The bank protection will protect the upland property and maintain and improve the integrity of the riverbank, which helps protect Public Trust resources for recreational use by the public.

Although the deck in Steamboat Slough occupies public property leased for private use, the limited water-related recreational value of this area and the relatively small portion of the existing private use encroaching onto State-owned lands indicate the proposed lease for the subject facilities would not substantially interfere with Public Trust needs and values at this time and for a limited term. The proposed lease will not result in a change in the use of or impact to Public Trust resources. Based upon the particular facts at this location, staff recommends the Commission find that the proposed lease would not result in a substantial interference with Public Trust needs and values at this time and in this location.

The proposed lease does not alienate the State's fee simple interest or permanently impair public rights. The lease is limited to a 10-year term, does not grant the lessee exclusive rights to the lease premises, and reserves an easement to the public for Public Trust-consistent uses. Upon termination of the lease, the lessee may be required to remove all improvements from State land and restore the lease premises to their original condition.

The proposed lease requires the lessee to insure the lease premises and indemnify the State for any liability incurred as a result of the lessee's activities thereon. The lease also requires the payment of annual rent to compensate the people of the State for the occupation of the public land involved.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE:**

### ***INTRODUCTION:***

The climate crisis and rising sea levels are impacting California's coastal and inland waterways now. Likely impacts to the lease premises include, but are not limited to, sea level rise, saltwater intrusion, prolonged drought, extreme heat, and changes to the intensity and timing of precipitation events. These impacts can exacerbate natural hydrological processes such as erosion, scour, and sedimentation. These impacts may affect the existing wood deck, boat dock and appurtenant facilities, and riprap bank protection subject to the proposed lease, located on Steamboat Slough.

**DATA & PROJECTIONS:**

Water levels in tidally-influenced rivers will rise as sea levels rise. The California Ocean Protection Council updated the [State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance](#) in 2024 to provide a synthesis of the best available science on sea level rise projections and rates for multiple emissions scenarios. Commission staff evaluated the “intermediate-high” and “high” scenarios due to the vulnerability and exposure of the lease location and the continued global reliance on fossil fuels. The San Francisco tide gauge was used for the projected sea level rise scenario for the region, as listed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Projected Sea Level Rise for San Francisco**

Year	Intermediate-High (feet)	High (feet)
2040	0.7	0.8
2050	1.0	1.3
2070	2.2	2.9
2100	4.8	6.5

Source: Table 6, State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance: 2024 Update

Note: Projections are with respect to a 2000 baseline.

In addition to rising seas, warmer temperatures have led California and the Southwest region to experience a megadrought from 2000 to 2022, measured as the driest 22 years in the past 1200 years, and more megadroughts are projected through the end of the century ([Fifth National Climate Change Assessment: Southwest Region, 2023](#)). Hotter and drier conditions have led to declines in snowpack volumes, higher-elevation snow lines, earlier snowmelt, and reduced overall runoff. Streamflow and river volumes are lower and will be drawn down farther as temperatures continue to rise and demand for water increases. Despite the region’s increasing aridity, flooding from extreme precipitation events is projected to increase, attributed to earlier snowmelt, sea level rise, and more intense and frequent atmospheric rivers. Minor and moderate flooding (flooding events defined as disruptive to damaging), attributed to higher water levels, is expected to increase five to ten orders of magnitude by 2100, according to [NOAA’s 2022 Sea Level Rise Technical Report](#).

**ANALYSIS:**

The lease premises are likely to experience more extreme conditions over the lease term than in the past, due to climate change. Changes to the timing and amount of runoff from the higher elevations of the watershed, stronger storm surge, and

rising water levels will result in higher flood risks. Bank stability may be compromised due to increased channel erosion and undercutting from more intense precipitation and floods. Structures on the lease premises may be exposed to saltier water and corrode faster than before. Conversely, drought could lower water levels for longer portions of the year and expose structures that were historically designed to be submerged to more air, wind, and heat. They could cease to function as intended, as water-related, water-dependent infrastructure (e.g., fixed docks could become disconnected from the water). Floating structures may be more adaptable to changing water levels than those that are fixed, but all structures may be at increased risk for damage from exposure to extreme heat and floods.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

To reduce the likelihood of adverse impacts to the lease premises and improvements, the lessee should consider the following adaptation strategies to improve resiliency to climate change: 1) reduce erosion along the riverbank by enhancing the bank protection structure(s) by planting or restoring native vegetation (shrubs, trees); 2) inspect fixed structures frequently and monitor for degradation, replacing damaged parts when necessary and elevating or relocating structures when exposure to flooding compromises structural function and integrity; and 3) monitor floating structures for corrosion and degradation, especially joints, brackets, hinges, and piling hoops, and replace as necessary. Any future construction or activities on State land would require a separate authorization from the Commission. For more information regarding nature-based strategies, please refer to the [2023 Shoreline Adaptation and the Public Trust](#) report.

Regular maintenance, as referenced in the lease, may reduce the likelihood of severe structural degradation or dislodgement. Pursuant to the proposed lease, the Applicant acknowledges that the lease premises and adjacent upland are located in an area that may be subject to the effects of climate change, including sea level rise.

**CONCLUSION:**

For all the reasons above, staff believes the issuance of this lease will not substantially interfere with Public Trust needs at this location, at this time, and for the term of the proposed lease; and is in the best interest of the State.

## **OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:**

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1. Approval or denial of the application is discretionary action by the Commission. Each time the Commission approves or rejects a use of sovereign land, it exercises legislatively delegated authority and responsibility as trustee of the State's Public Trust lands as authorized by law. If the Commission denies the application, the Applicant, as prior lessee, may be required to remove the subject improvements and restore the premises to their original condition. The Lessee has no right to a new lease or to renewal of any previous lease.
2. This action is consistent with the "Leading Climate Activism" and "Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs" Strategic Focus Areas of the Commission's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.
3. Staff recommends that the Commission find that this activity is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as a categorically exempt project. The project is exempt under Class 1, Existing Facilities; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subdivision (a)(2).

Authority: Public Resources Code section 21084 and California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061 and California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

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It is recommended that the Commission:

### **CEQA FINDING:**

Find that the activity is exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061 as a categorically exempt project, Class 1, Existing Facilities; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subdivision (a)(2).

### **PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTEREST:**

1. Find that the existing and, for a limited period, continuing use of the existing boat dock and appurtenant facilities do not substantially interfere with the common law Public Trust Doctrine.

2. Find that the existing and, for a limited period, continuing use of the existing deck and bank protection is not generally consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine, but the current use does not substantially interfere with the Public Trust at this time.
3. Find that issuing the proposed lease is in the best interest of the State.

**AUTHORIZATION:**

Authorize issuance of a General Lease – Recreational and Protective Structure Use to the Applicant beginning February 20, 2026, for a term of 10 years, for the use of a deck, boat dock with appurtenant facilities, and bank protection; annual rent in the amount of \$465 with an annual Consumer Price Index adjustment; and liability insurance in an amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence.