



Advisory
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DWR Responds to Wheeler Island Levee Break

SACRAMENTO-The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is providing emergency response assistance at Wheeler Island in the Suisun Marsh following a levee break yesterday afternoon which sent water pouring in from adjacent Honker Bay.

[Map of the area](#) (156k .jpg)





DWR began receiving reports around 2:30 p.m. Thursday regarding a 20 to 25 foot breach at the 1,000 acre Island just north of Pittsburg and south of the Grizzly Island Wildlife Refuge. There are no residences or other significant structures on the island, which is described as a "marshy" area commonly flooded to low levels for duck hunting purposes.

Under the jurisdiction of Reclamation District 2127, Wheeler Island lies at the lower eastern end of the Suisun Marsh. The largest contiguous brackish water marsh remaining on the west coast of North America, Suisun Marsh is a critical part of the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary ecosystem.

Reclamation district officials have asked for State levee program emergency funds to close the breach as soon as possible and DWR executives have agreed. Without levee repairs, water would slowly fill the island and partially inundate the State Water Project's Roaring River levee, possibly causing wave wash erosion.

The levee break is a considerable distance northwest of the southern Delta area where DWR pumps water for export via the California Aqueduct to the San Joaquin Valley, San Francisco Bay Area, Central Coast and Southern California. No negative water quality impacts are expected on SWP operations at this time.

DWR staff visited the remote site by helicopter shortly after the initial levee failure reports. The breach is relatively small and is not expanding rapidly. It is also in the general area where levee overtopping and limited breaches last January caused limited flooding of the island. DWR provided financial assistance for approximately \$100,000 worth of emergency repairs at that time. Early estimates to repair the current break are in the \$50,000 range.

It is not known what caused the levee to give way; however, the breach location is at a site where a drainage/irrigation pipe appeared to have been previously constructed.

The San Rafael-based company Dutra Materials was expected to begin repairing the levee sometime today.

The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.

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