

Whale's Head Wetland Park: Fostering a socio-ecologic community

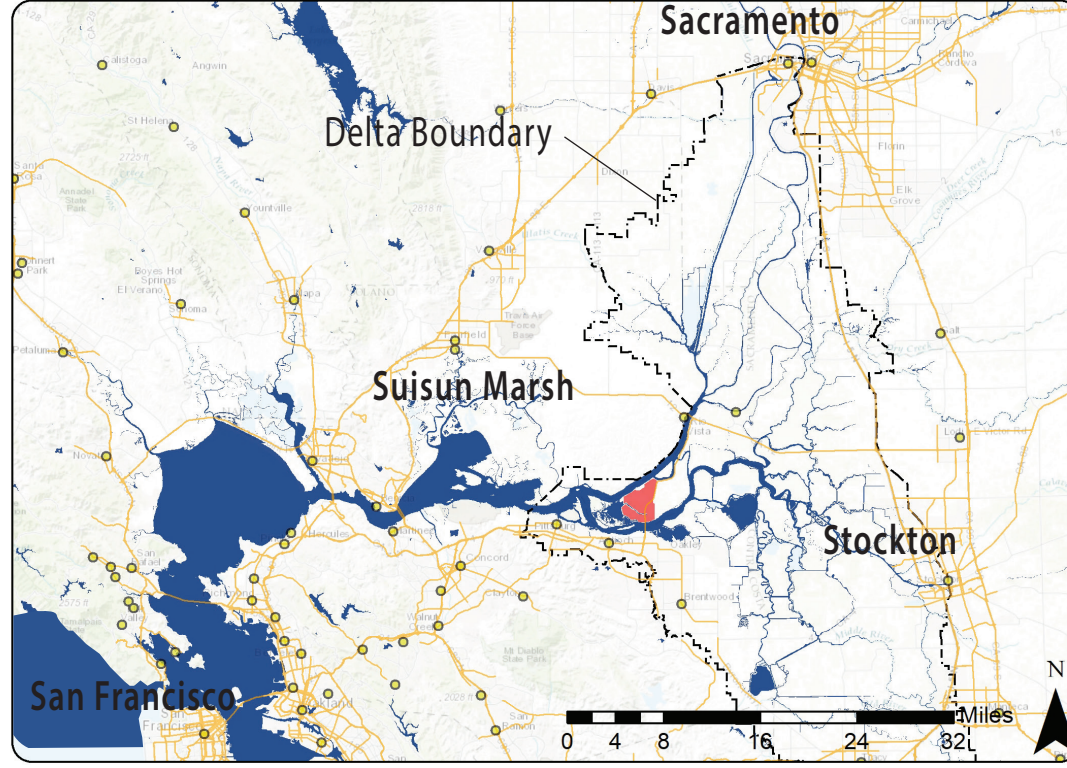
By: George JM Frost

The Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta is a vital area to multiple social and ecologic systems in California. This becomes a major problem when attempting to manage the various systems that have conflicting interests (i.e. ecological habitat versus agriculture and water resources). Recently there have been efforts to manage the California Delta as a multi-faceted system, though there has been little done about promoting the well-being or

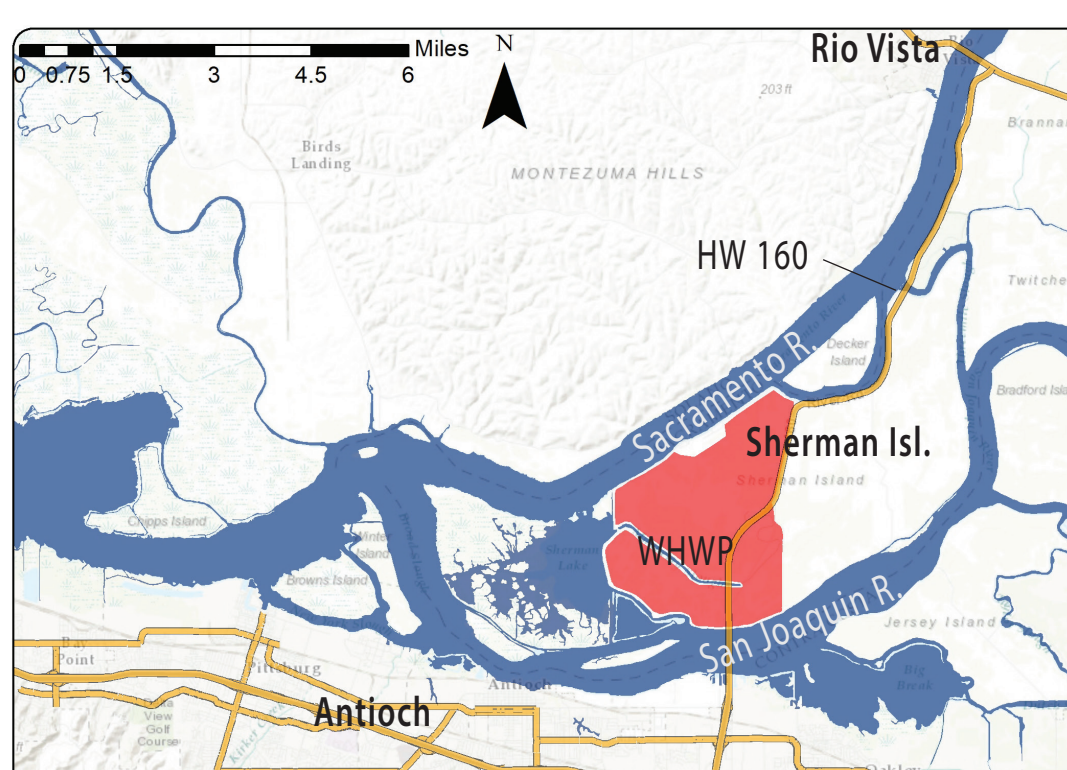
stewardship of the delta; the biggest threat is the delta's invisibility to the public. The Delta's natural resources have been over used and are continually being degraded, including habitat, water, and agricultural land. The complex socio-ecological system of the delta will greatly benefit from more public involvement, and the aim of this project is to facilitate this. Millions of Californians depend on water from the delta, and even more Americans across the

country depend on the food the delta produces. But for the most part, the only people that know about the delta are those that live near it. If all those that depended on it cared more for it, the governing agencies would follow suite, encouraging more regenerative management practices in the Delta. I chose Sherman Island as the site because of its ability to facilitate different recreation activities as well as restoration efforts. Its central location and

proximity to the Bay Area allows for easy connection to the larger community. With a stronger community and identity, the delta will cease to be invisible and proper focus, management, and protection will follow. This design proposal will bring different groups together to expand the delta community.



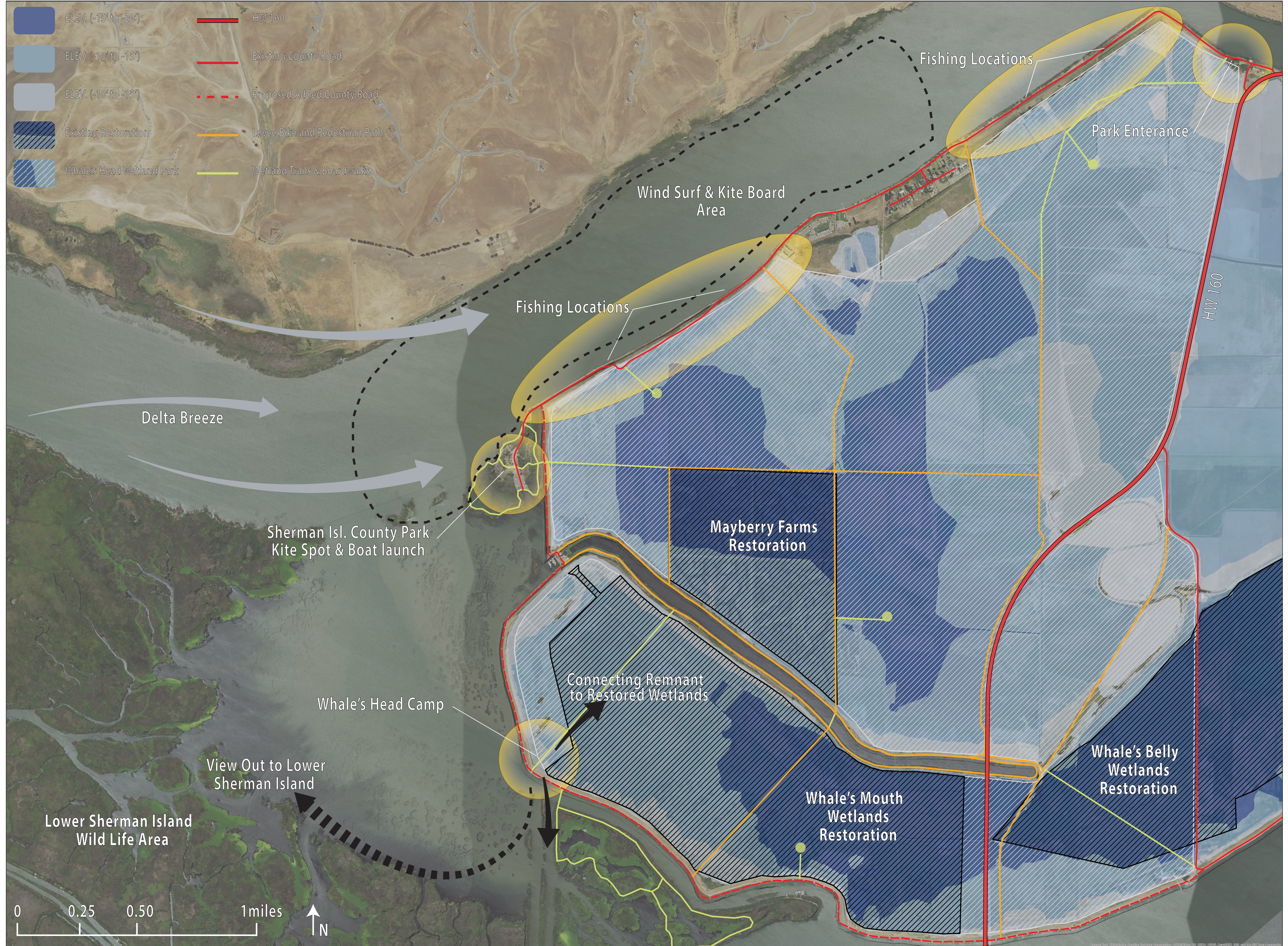
DELTA REGION- Whale's Head Wetland Park is situated at the mouth of the delta; at the convergence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers on Sherman Island. This area is a transitional space between the Bay Area and the Central Valley.



SITE CONTEXT- Located between the cities Rio Vista and Antioch along highway 160, the park will have easy access to many. The Park's location will also be in proximity to other wildlife research locations like Antioch Dunes, Grizzly Island Wildlife Refuge, and the Suisun Marsh, as well as the future location of the Delta Research Center in Rio Vista.



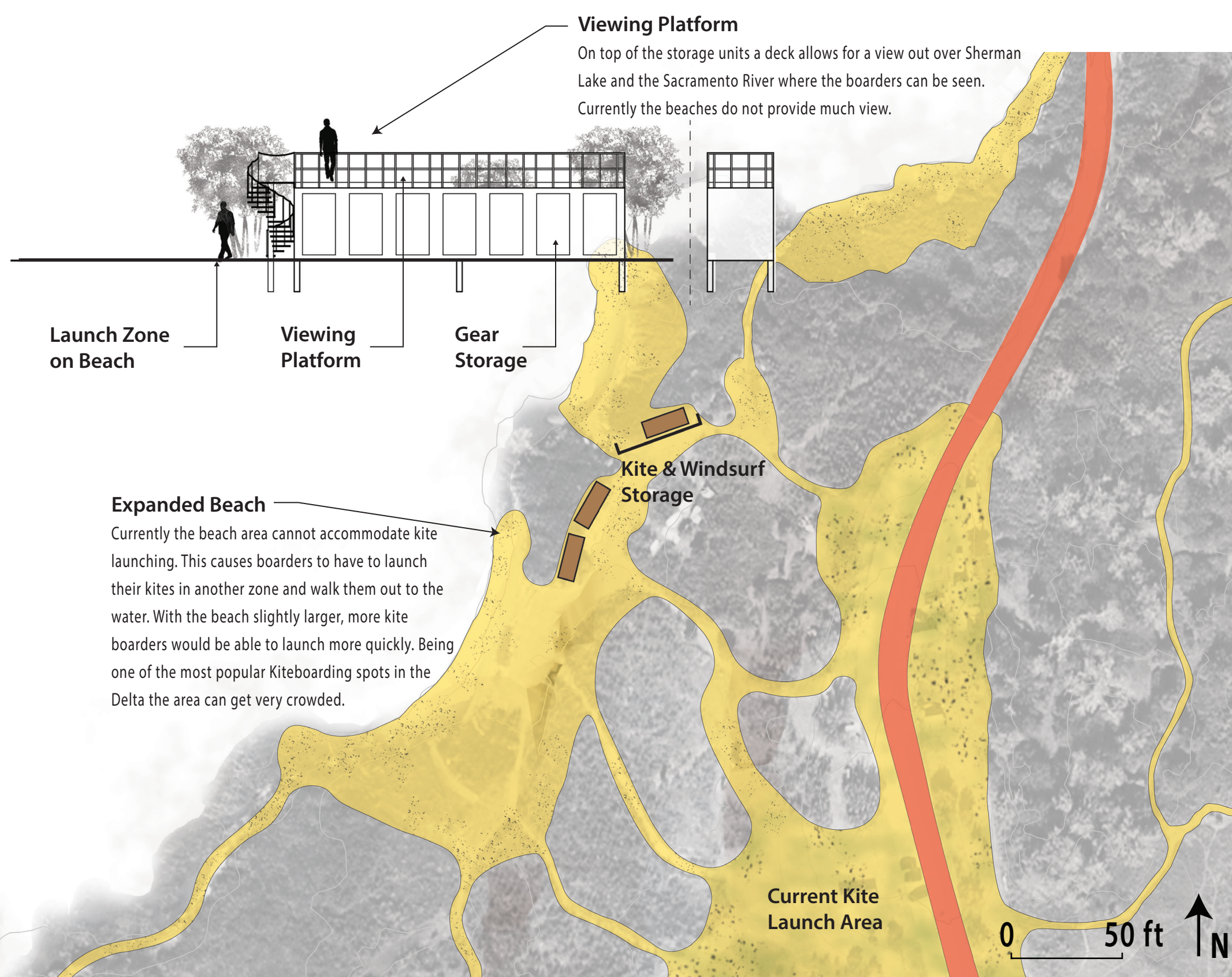
Phasing



Are typical Delta recreational activities compatible with wetland restoration projects?

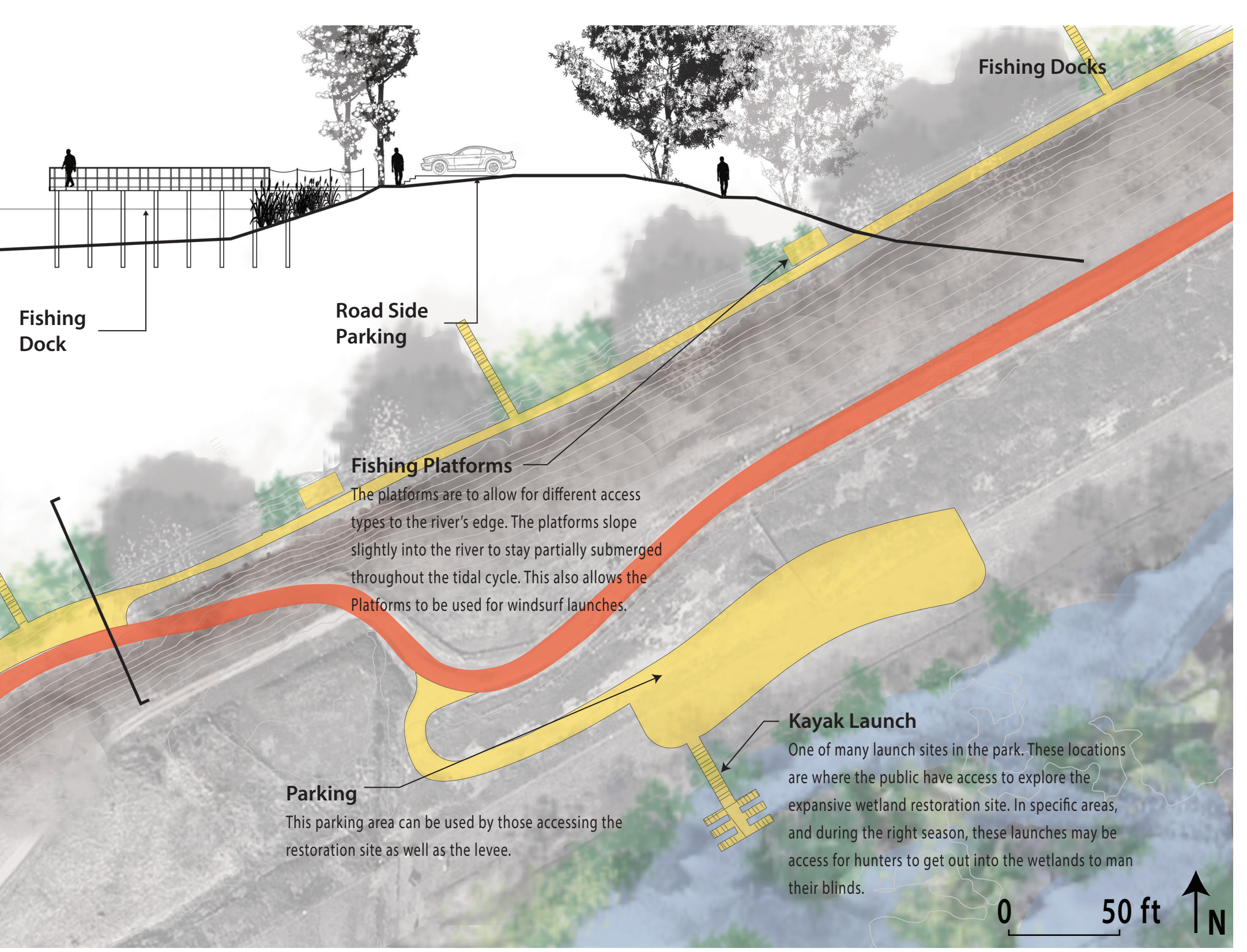
Kite Beach Area

Over the past decade the sport of kite-boarding has been steadily increasing in popularity. The Delta's unique geography makes it a world class location for the sport. It is ideal to have large open bodies of water, and with the delta being mostly channelized, larger open water like Sherman lake become hot spots. Sherman Island county park is one of the most popular kite-boarding spots in the delta and has a really tight community based around this location. One of the constraints of the site is a small beach area and inadequate facilities for storing gear. For my proposal of Whale's Head Wetland Park, the county park area will mostly be left as is, except for a slight expansion of the beach and added kite-board storage that double as observation platforms. This will allow more people to use one of the delta's most popular spots.



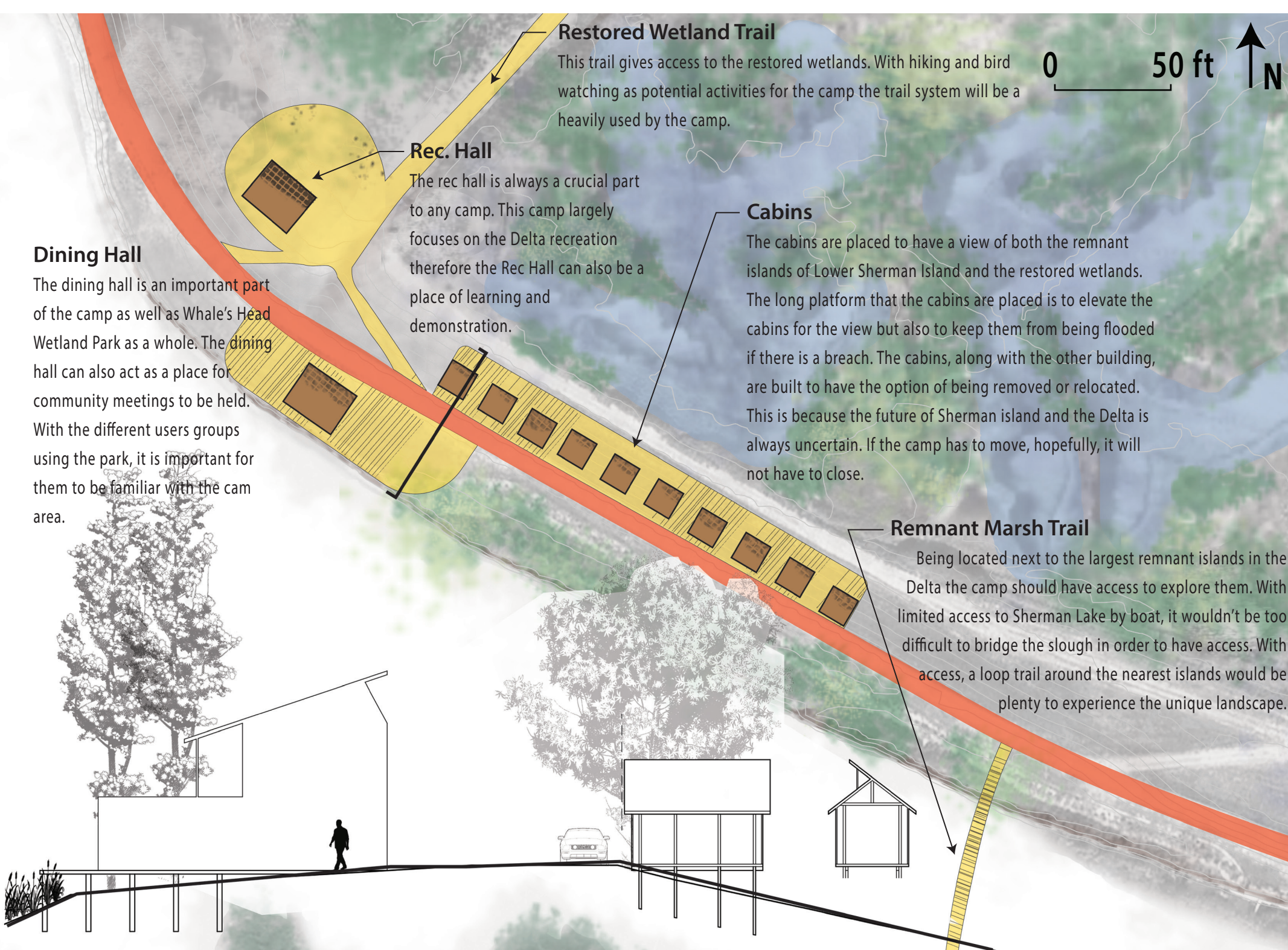
Levee Fishing

It is very common throughout the delta to find cars of fishermen parked along the levee roads. Fishing is one of the most common recreation activities in the delta. The fisher folk avail themselves of this opportunity to escape from their urban and suburban life and enjoy nature. The problem with the heavily used informal fishing spots is that they are not well kept. There are no restrooms, waste bins, fire pits, etc. The informality of the space lends itself to benign abuse. The fishermen, uninformed of the importance of the landscape becomes careless. This results in large amounts of litter along the roads and the occasional fire that gets out of control. If the levee roads had locations along it that were designated parking areas with the above listed amenities, this problem would vanish. Information boards would provide information about the area and would educate the users, leading to an understanding that this is a resource deserving of care by all its users.



Camp/Retreat

The idea for a children's camp is to encourage local and distant schools to use this place to have field trips or summer camps for their students. The camp will have all the facilities necessary for such a camp including activities common to many camps, but the Whale's Head Wetland Camp will also teach kids about the importance of the Delta as well as let them explore the delta landscape as it was before settlement. The camp will be located near Lower Sherman Island which holds the largest remnant wetlands in the delta, virtually unchanged since the 19th century. Because camps usually operate through the spring and summer, the camp can also be used for group retreats, weddings, or just rented out to hunters out in the off season. There would be a rec hall as well as a dining hall that would be useful for many different types of events. The location of the camp is important, it will have easy access to both remnant marsh and restored marsh, giving a good example of what has been largely destroyed and how we are trying to bring that back.



Main Entrance

With highway 160 running through Sherman Island and along the entire eastern edge of the wetland park, it should be a simple matter to grab people's attention as they drive by. An entrance will be located at the northern side of the island where West Sherman Island Rd meets Hwy 160. This will be what invites passerby into the park. This location will have an indoor and outdoor gathering space as well as interactive spaces describing the park, the island, and the greater delta region. The building on site will be part meeting hall, part ranger station, part extension to the proposed Delta Research Center that may be located just up the river in Rio Vista. This location can be a destination in itself, but will encourage visitors to venture deeper into the park.

