



- + **RECOVERING** the June Sucker
- + **RESTORING** the Natural Ecosystem
- + **IMPROVING** Recreational Experiences



Spring 2019

# PROVO RIVER DELTA PROJECT CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN 2020

We're processing purchase documents for the last and largest ownership needed for the Provo River Delta Restoration Project. Paperwork should be finalized this summer. With land acquired from the five private ownerships needed, final designs for the project will be completed this summer and fall. Necessary permits will then be acquired and construction will begin in early 2020. Initial tasks include constructing a berm along the southern perimeter of the delta, beginning excavation of water features in the delta area, and starting work on the new Provo River Delta Gateway Park (see *article inside*).

## IN THIS ISSUE

*This newsletter is to provide an update on the Provo River Delta Restoration Project progress since last Fall. The following project aspects are highlighted in this newsletter:*

- **Project Background**
- **Provo River Delta Gateway Park**
- **Construction Schedule**
- **Water Supply and June sucker**
- **A Shorebird Tale**



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

This newsletter is to update you on project progress. For more background and detailed information, and to view our project video, visit our website: [provoriverdelta.us](http://provoriverdelta.us)



# PROVO RIVER DELTA GATEWAY PARK

## BACKGROUND

The Provo River Delta Restoration Project is being implemented to help recover the endangered June sucker and will improve the ecosystem and recreational experiences in the area. The project involves diverting most of the last reach of lower Provo River's flow north of its current location into a constructed system of braided waterways and wetlands that connect with Utah Lake. This will create habitat critical to the survival of the young June sucker hatched in the upstream portions of the lower Provo River.

The old channel will continue to receive stream flow and will maintain a constant water elevation year-round. An aeration system will be installed to improve water quality, aesthetics and odor. Access to this channel will be made easier and safer and trailheads with parking and non-motorized boat access will be constructed. Additional trails and two observation towers will be constructed around the new delta area, so the public can enjoy the beauty of Utah Lake and the restored delta. Bird monitoring and mosquito and weed control are ongoing project elements.

The Provo River Delta will benefit the State of Utah by ensuring important water delivery projects linked to June sucker recovery stay on track. The local community also will benefit from enhanced outdoor recreation opportunities and protected open space.

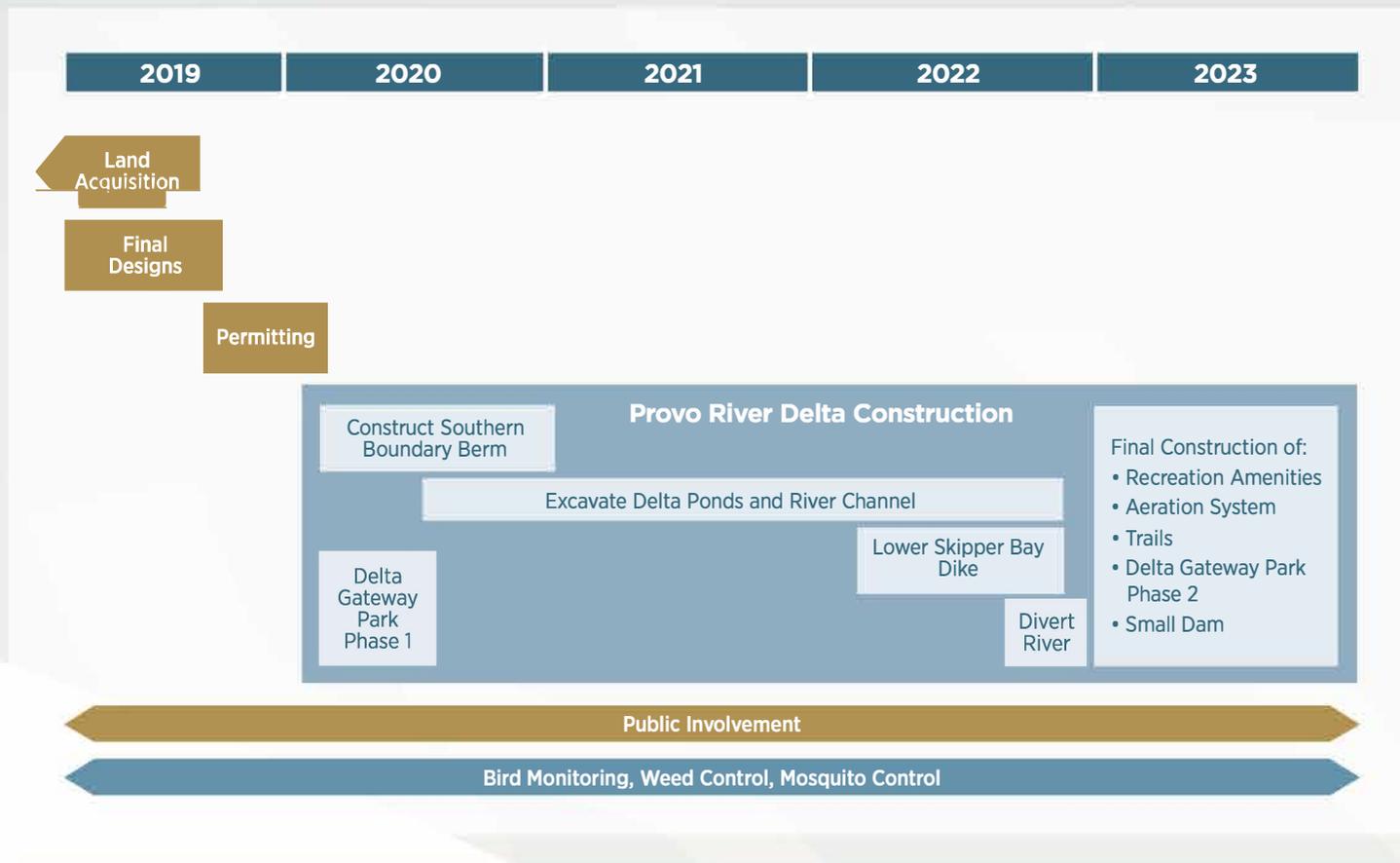


*Concept drawing of Provo River Delta Gateway Park. Features shown remain preliminary and final implementation will depend on priorities and budget.*

Design work continues for the new trailhead and park that will be built on the south side of Provo River near Lakeshore Drive. Concept drawings have been refined based on input from citizen design committee members, and additional input was received during a community open house held in April. Provo City Parks and Recreation Department is leading the design effort and the project will be funded through the Provo River Delta Project. Delta Gateway Park will serve as a hub connecting the existing Provo River Parkway trail with the planned Skipper Bay trail that will be built along the southern boundary of the new delta. Park features will include river access, parking for passenger vehicles and horse trailers, nature play areas, interpretive exhibits, and other amenities.



# ANTICIPATED PROVO RIVER DELTA PROJECT CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE



## THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WATER SUPPLY AND JUNE SUCKER RECOVERY

Last year was Utah's driest year on record. But, thanks to the June sucker recovery program, the lower Provo River never dried up.

This may seem like a small thing, but it's actually an indicator of the enormous progress made since the June sucker was first listed as endangered in 1986. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were instances of spawning June sucker dying after being stranded when upstream storage and other uses consumed all available water, leaving the lower Provo River dry.

These fish kills were a factor leading to a 1994 *jeopardy opinion* that ultimately spurred water supply agencies to proactively cooperate to recover the species and ensure they could continue to store, divert, and deliver water to farmers and cities.

For more than 20 years, the June sucker flow workgroup has worked together to help provide sufficient flows to support springtime spawning activities. Since 2015, the June Sucker Program has also consistently provided supplemental flows late into the summer to ensure the lower Provo River stays wet all summer long. This instream water maintains a healthier ecosystem and supports popular activities like fishing and boating.



*A trickle of water flows down the lower Provo River during dry summertime conditions in 2013.*



*Water in the lower Provo River in August 2018, when instream flows were supplemented all summer.*

# A SHOREBIRD TALE

In 2017, biologists began monitoring birds in and around the Provo River Delta project area to develop baseline information on bird use under existing habitat conditions. Monitoring will continue during and after project construction to assess how birds respond to the new delta habitat. The data will help identify if there are increased risks to avian safety from the changes, so they can be mitigated.

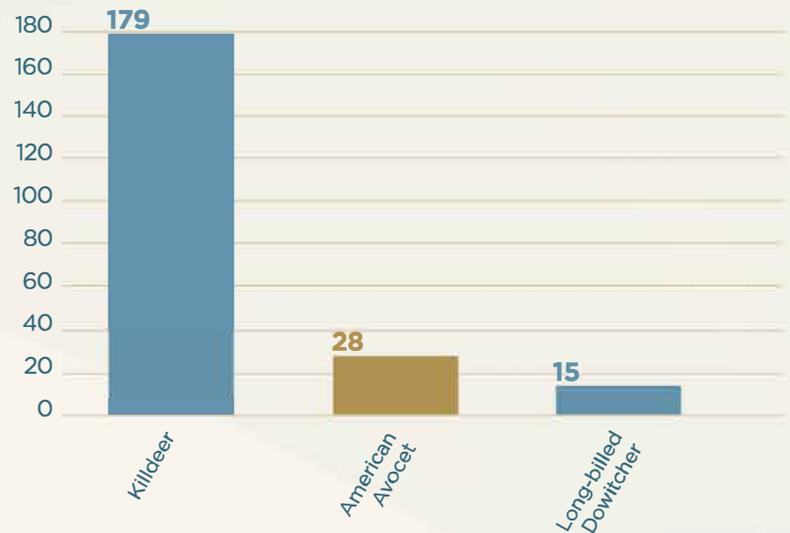
Recent monitoring observations in the Utah Lake State Park marina area provide an example of how bird use and habitat are closely related. During springtime in 2017, habitat in the marina was mostly open water, and only three species of shorebirds were observed. In 2018, much of the marina was drained for dredging, creating extensive mudflats that attracted six additional shorebird species and resulted in four times as many springtime shorebird observations.

With the extensive dataset being collected in the survey, we expect to have many more “bird tales” to share in the future.

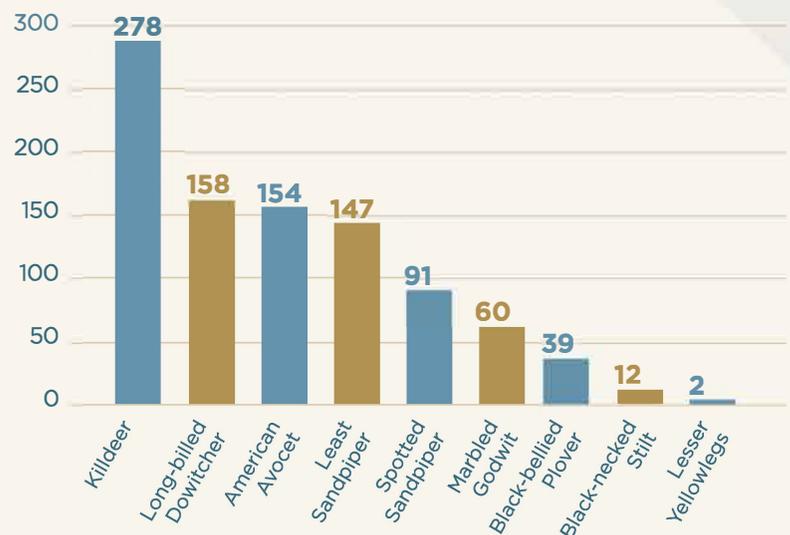


The black-necked stilt, a shorebird observed after the marina had been drained. Photo credit: Allan Hack. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/aehack/40094240460>

## SHOREBIRD OBSERVATIONS Utah Lake State Park, March–May 2017



## SHOREBIRD OBSERVATIONS Utah Lake State Park, March–May 2018



## LAKEVIEW PARKWAY

We continue to coordinate with Provo City to ensure their construction schedule for Lakeview Parkway integrates with the delta construction schedule. Provo City expects to initiate construction work on the portion of Lakeview Parkway between Boat Harbor Drive and Center Street this summer.

## DOMINION ENERGY

With funding through the Provo River Delta Project, Dominion Energy will be relocating a buried natural gas pipeline deeper underground where it traverses the delta restoration project area. This relocation is needed to allow safe excavation of planned delta channels and ponds. The pipeline work is expected to occur later this summer and fall.