

# Nutria: Threat and Response

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Invasive Species  
Program Manager



# Background



- **Nutria or coypu (Myocastor coypus)**
- **Large, semi-aquatic rodent**
  - **Fresh and brackish water**
- **Native to South America**
- **Introduced for fur trade**
- **Declared eradicated in 1970s**

# Identification

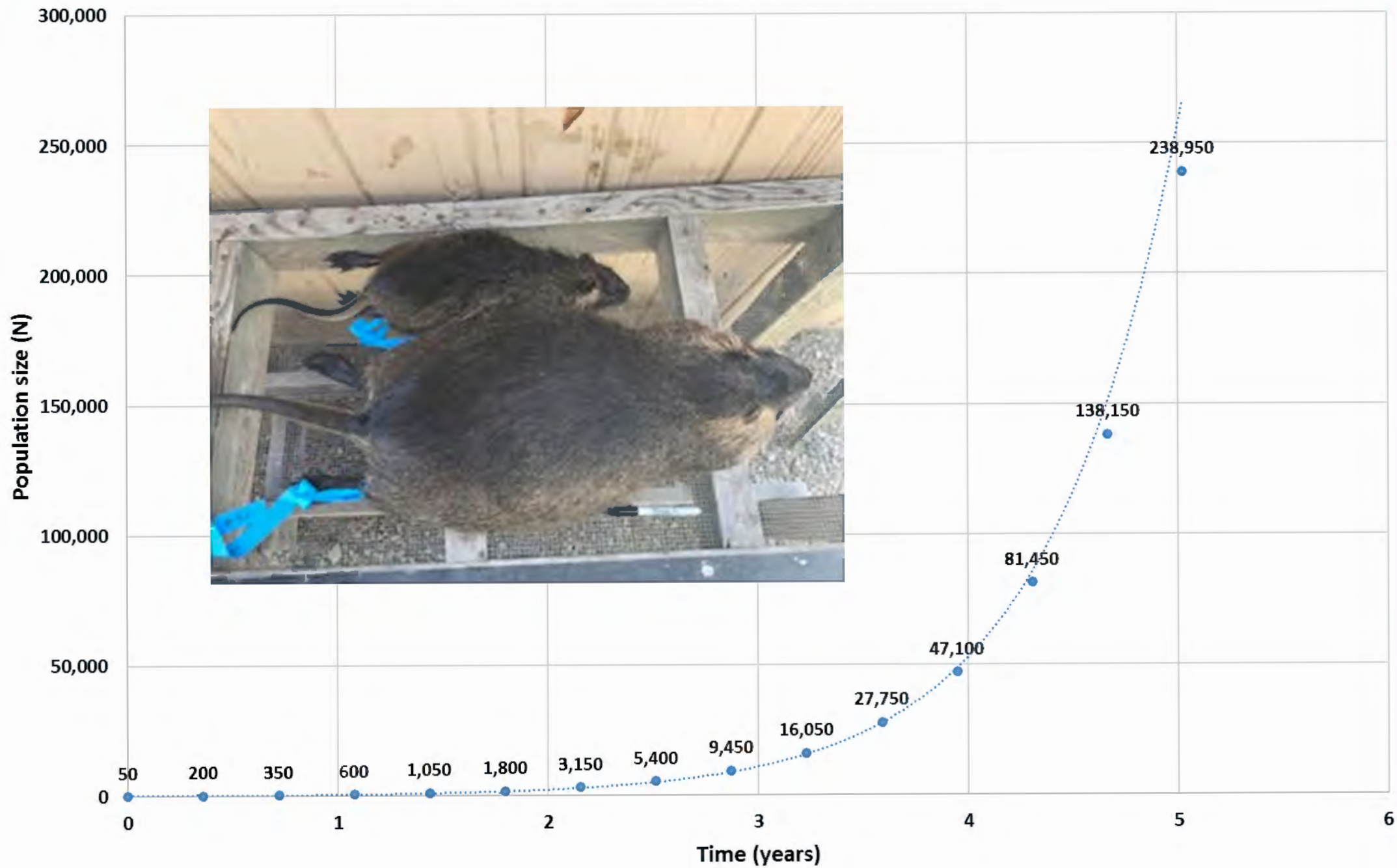


# Biology/Ecology



- Reproductive by 4-6 months
  - $\leq 3$  litters/13 months
- Live in social groups
  - Dispersal  $\leq 50$  mi
- Avg. home range size  $< 25$  acres
  - Move 2+ miles from den

Nutria population growth over 5 years ( $N_t=rN$ ;  $r=b-d$  avg)



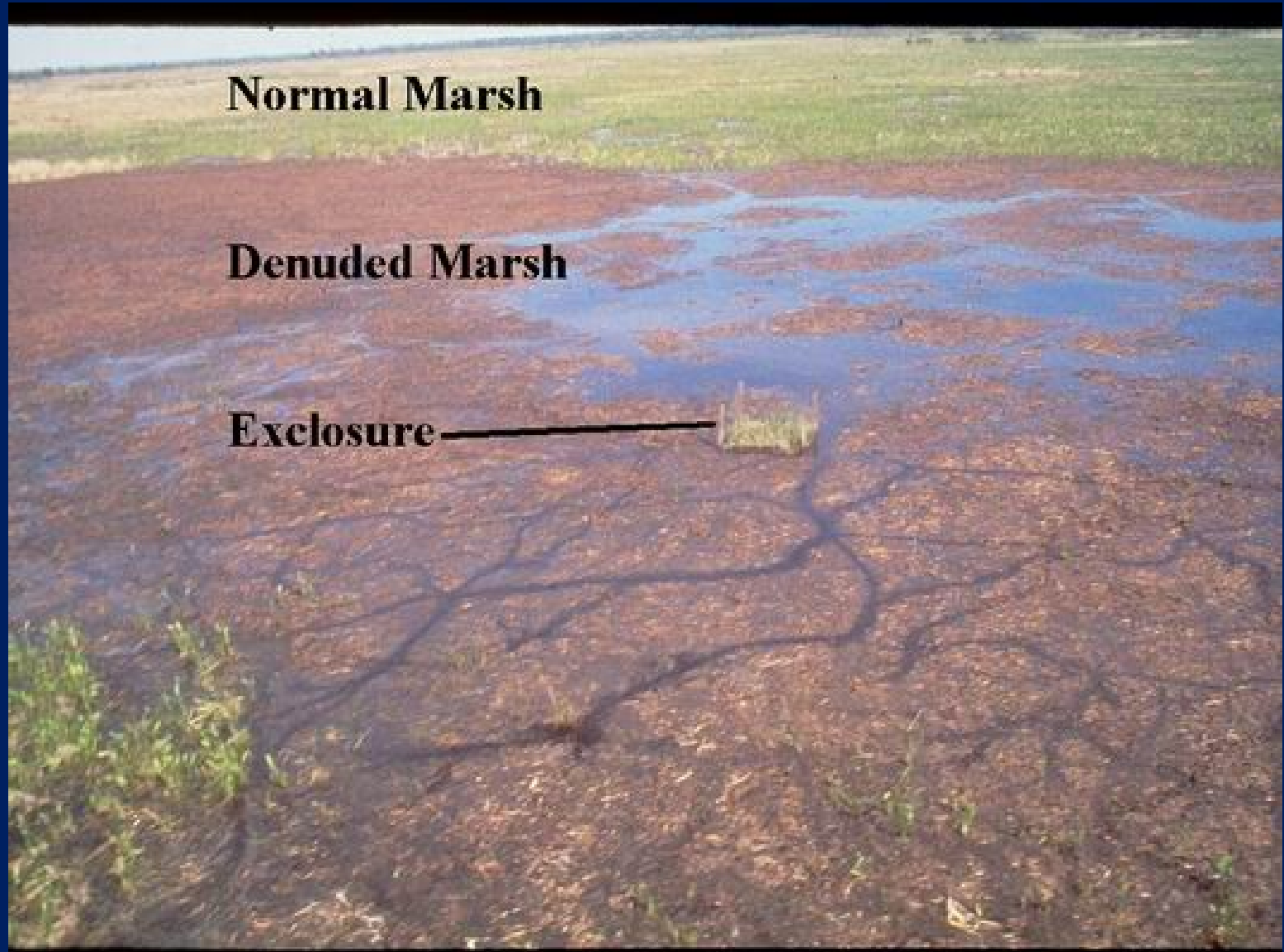
# Impacts

- Consume  $\leq 25\%$  of their weight each day and destroy up to 10x the amount consumed
- Severe erosion, conversion to open water
- Burrowing damages infrastructure and levees
  - 3-18 ft deep, may extend  $\leq 150$  ft into bank



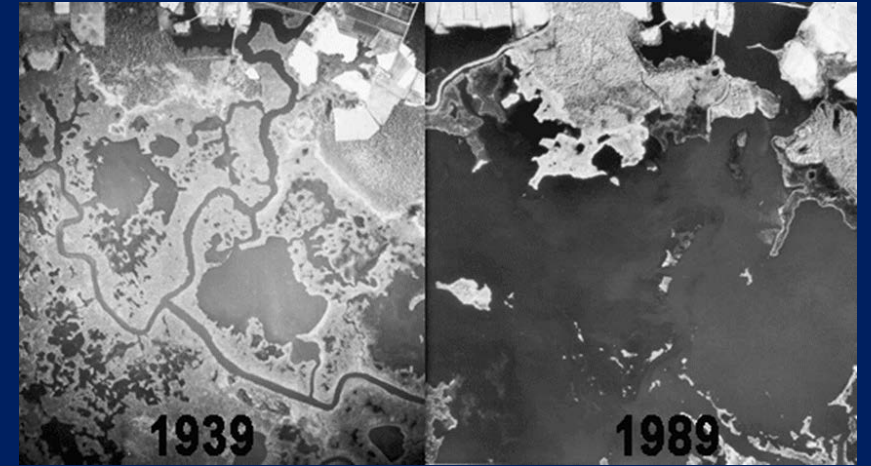
# Impacts - Louisiana

- **Coastwide Nutria Control Program**
  - Incentives - \$5/tail, 250 – 350 trappers
  - Since 2002, 5 M harvested (\$24 M)
  - Estimated > 100K coastal acres damaged



# Impacts – Chesapeake Bay

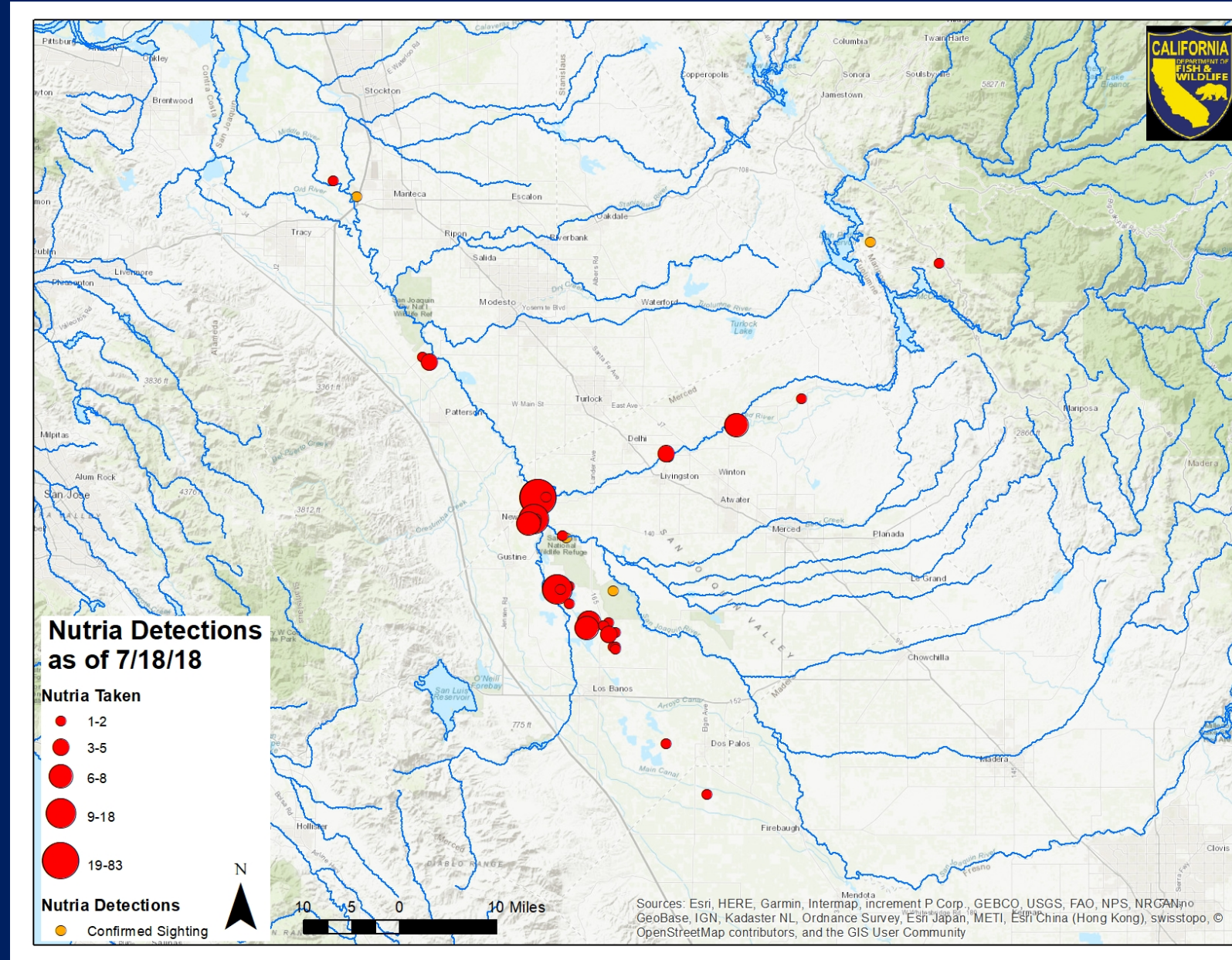
- Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Project (CBNEP)
  - Led by USDA-Wildlife Services and USFWS
  - \$15.8 M over 15 years
  - Over 14K nutria removed





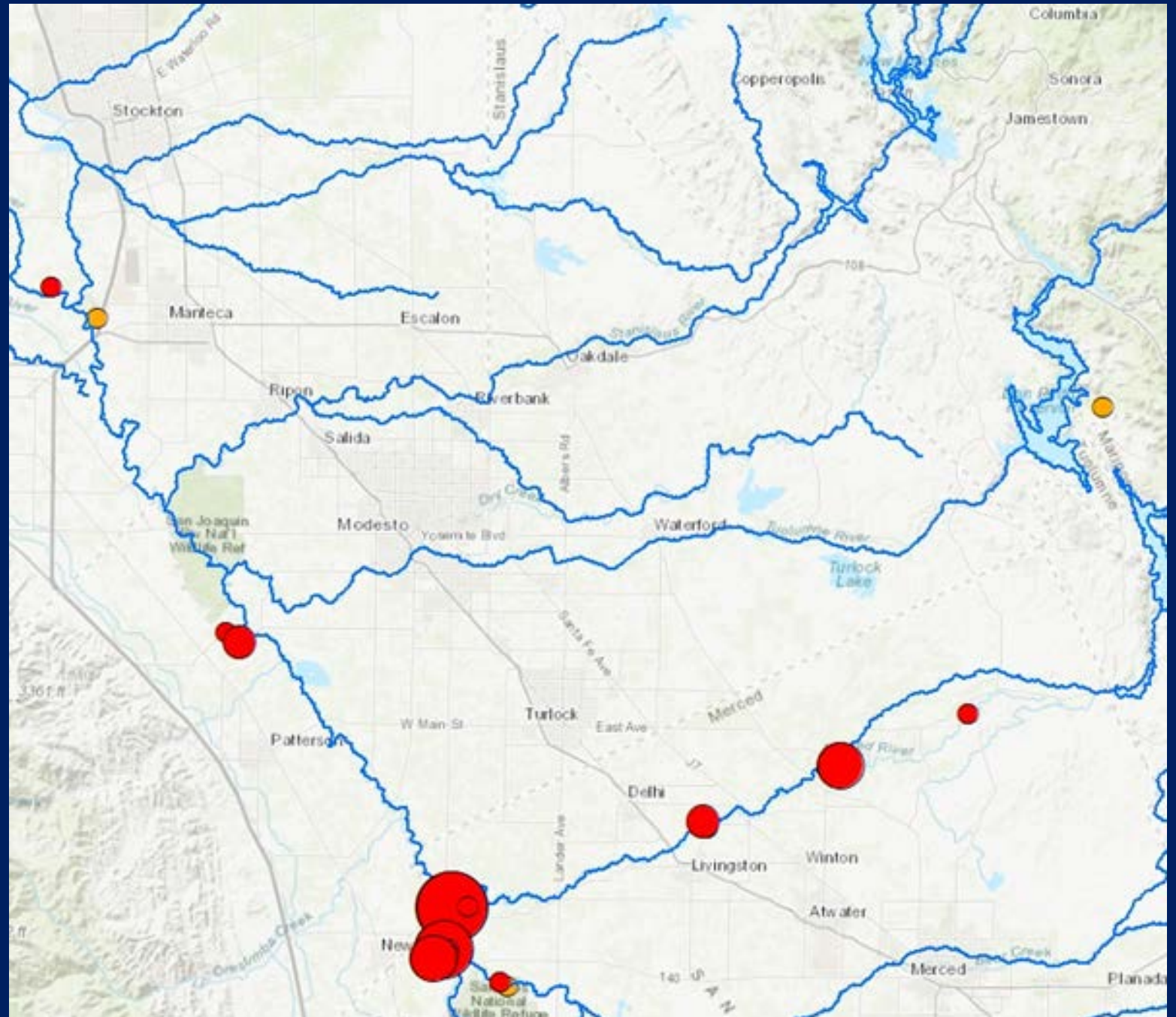
# Discovery in California

- Initial discovery - March 2017
- 202 taken, additional confirmed
- Juvenile/adult, M/F
- Stanislaus, Merced, Fresno, Tuolumne, Mariposa, and San Joaquin counties
- Federal, State, and private land



# Stanislaus Co

- Five taken between 9/10/17 and 4/25/18 at San Joaquin Wetland Farms along SJR
- 3 of 5 carcasses recovered; 1 male, 2 females, each ~12lb



# Response in California

- **CDFW survey/trapping teams on the ground**
- **Access agreements**
- **Long-term funding**
- **Interagency coordination**
- **Outreach**



SF Chronicle


# Eradication Approach and Implementation

- **5-mile buffer around detections**
- **40-acre grid within buffer (“cells”)**
- **Identify suitable habitat within each cell**
- **CDFW staff and contracted WS staff**



# Surveys

Notify property owner of upcoming survey and plan around any access agreement conditions



Walk the cell to confirm presence of habitat and look for nutria sign




**\*IF\*** nutria sign is detected, set trail cameras to confirm nutria presence




**\*IF\*** nutria present – initiate removal  
If not, note habitat and revisit if appropriate

# Removal

Notify property owner of confirmed nutria; enlist their assistance



Set traps appropriate for habitat and in accordance with all access agreement conditions



Check traps daily; remove and dispose of all captures off-site



Trap until no are nutria present

# Partners

- **CA Food and Ag**
- **CA Water Resources**
- **CA OES**
- **CA State Parks**
- **CACASA/County Ag Commissioners**
- **USDA Wildlife Services**
- **USFWS**
- **Delta Conservancy**
- **Wildlife Conservation Board**

# Key Points

- **Eradication requires that every nutria is removed**
- **This will be a multi-year effort that requires sustained, intensive effort. To do so requires a long-term commitment of resources and ongoing public support.**
- **Eradication is cheap compared to the ongoing cost of managing their impacts**
- **We are staff-limited. Minimizing our administrative efforts maximizes our field efforts**



Report sightings to:

(866) 440-9530

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# Questions & Discussion