"The Delta Plan shall promote options for new and improved infrastructure relating to the water conveyance in the Delta, storage systems, and for the operation of both to achieve the coequal goals."
Water Code Section 85304

What the Delta Plan Says About Conveyance, Storage & Operations

The following excerpts are drawn from a review of the narrative as well as the policies and recommendations contained in Chapters 3 and 4 of the Delta Plan. They are intended as a starting point and guide for discussions about the proposed new approach to BDCP and its relationship to the Council's Delta Plan.

In general, the Delta Plan promotes improvements to Delta conveyance, and advocates for operation of that conveyance that better recognizes variability of California's precipitation, that minimizes entrainment and reverse flows detrimental to fish, and that improves resiliency in light of threats of sea level rise and seismic events.

- "These patterns of Delta exports will be consistent with more natural flow patterns in the Delta, which will aid native species and reduce regulatory uncertainty." (page 65)
- "At the same time, deliveries of Delta water will be more predictable due to use of storage to deliver wet-year water that is exported and stored for future use." (page 65)
- "Because California's annual precipitation is remarkably variable, the past expectation that each year – wet or dry – should yield the same quantity of water exported from the Delta watershed is unrealistic and can be an obstacle to necessary improvements in water supply reliability." (page 85)
- "…more natural flow patterns can be compatible with improving the reliability of water deliveries from the Delta." (page 86)
- "Fish predation and mortality at the export pumps could be reduced if the diversion points of the State and federal water projects in the Delta were moved or modified." (page 86)
- "Risks to a reliable source of fresh water conveyed through the Delta could be reduced through conveyance alternatives that could provide multiple diversion locations in the Delta (as those being analyzed in the BDCP process) and through strategic levee investments." (page 86)
- "…conveyance benefits may be limited without the benefit of added storage." (page 86)

- "Improved operational flexibility, consistent with ecosystem restoration, can result in more reliable water supplies for all beneficial uses from year to year and, when managed for multiple benefits, can also ensure adequate flows to meet public trust needs, including the protection of the Delta ecosystem." (page 86)
- "Statewide water storage, both above and below ground, is currently inadequate, especially south of the Delta, to facilitate export of water at times of surplus when the impacts on the Delta's ecosystem are reduced and the only impediment is lack of available storage capacity." (page 86)
- "Conveyance improvements can enhance the operational flexibility of the Delta system to divert and move water at times and from locations that are less harmful to fisheries, or to reliably transport environmental water supplies to specific locations at times when it can benefit fish and water quality." (page 89)
- "Existing configurations of Delta water conveyance and associated conveyance facilities do not provide adequate long-term reliability to meet current and projected water demands for SWP and CVP exports from the Delta watershed." (page 89)
- "The greatest conflicts between the water needs of people and fish within the Delta occur during dry years. That is when the least amount of water is flowing into the Delta and, historically, when exports have been a much larger percentage of Delta inflows compared with wet years. The timing and pattern of Delta diversions must be shifted so that more water can be exported during wet years, when there is significantly more water available for diversion, and less is taken in dry years, when the water is needed for in-Delta water quality and ecosystem protections.
- "The ability to export larger amounts of water from the Delta during wet years will require improved conveyance to increase operational flexibility as well as more storage both north and south of the Delta so that this water can be captured, stored, and ultimately delivered to meet the water needs of both people and fish. With these improvements, Delta operations and, importantly, Delta export deliveries will become more predictable." (page 105)
- Problem statement: "The state's interconnected network of surface and groundwater storage is insufficient in volume, conveyance capacity, and flexibility to achieve the coequal goals. The completion of the BDCP and the implementation of major new surface and groundwater storage facilities are needed but may take many years to implement, which will require more near-term actions to improve Delta operations and reduce the state's vulnerability to potential disruptions in water exports from the Delta due to floods and earthquakes or the need for additional regulatory protections for the environment." (page 105)

Applicable Regulations and Recommendations

The Delta Plan also includes a number of regulations and recommendations that address conveyance, storage, and operations. Among these are:

The Delta Plan includes regulations requiring:

- Reduced reliance on the Delta through improved regional water self-reliance. (WR P1)
- Compliance with the SWRCB's Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan flow objectives as a requirement for Delta Plan consistency (ER P1).
- Avoidance or mitigation of projects which would prevent future habitat restoration in high-priority restoration areas (ER P3).
- Avoidance mitigation of introduction of invasive nonnative species (or actions which would improve habitat for nonnative invasives) (ER P5).
- The use of best available science and appropriate adaptive management for all ecosystem and water management projects (GP 1).
- Implementation of protective mitigation measures (GP 1).
- Consultation with local city and county governments to avoid/reduce land use conflicts, consideration of comments from local agencies and Delta Protection Commission (DP P2).

The Delta Plan implementing regulations include (23CCR 5001(h)(1)(A-C):

> "Coequal goals" means the two goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. The coequal goals shall be achieved in a manner that protects and enhances the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place. In addition, "achievement" for the purpose of determining whether a plan, program, or project meets the definition of a "covered action" under section 5001(j) is further defined as follows:
>
> (1) "Achieving the coequal goal of providing a more reliable water supply for California" means all of the following:
>
> (A) Better matching the state's demands for reasonable and beneficial uses of water to the available water supply. This will be done by promoting, improving, investing in, and implementing projects and programs that improve the resiliency of the state's water systems, increase water efficiency and conservation, increase water recycling and use of advanced water technologies, improve groundwater management, expand storage, and improve Delta conveyance and operations. The evaluation of progress toward improving reliability will take into account the inherent variability in water demands and supplies across California;

(B) Regions that use water from the Delta watershed will reduce their reliance on this water for reasonable and beneficial uses, and improve regional self-reliance, consistent with existing water rights and the State's area-of-origin statutes and Reasonable Use and Public Trust Doctrines. This will be done by improving, investing in, and implementing local and regional projects and programs that increase water conservation and efficiency, increase water recycling and use of advanced water technologies, expand storage, improve groundwater management, and enhance regional coordination of local and regional water supply development efforts; and

(C) Water exported from the Delta will more closely match water supplies available to be exported, based on water year type and consistent with the coequal goal of protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. This will be done by improving conveyance in the Delta and expanding groundwater and surface storage both north and south of the Delta to optimize diversions in wet years when more water is available and conflicts with the ecosystem are less likely, and limit diversions in dry years when conflicts with the ecosystem are more likely. Delta water that is stored in wet years will be available for water users during dry years, when the limited amount of available water must remain in the Delta, making water deliveries more predictable and reliable. In addition, these improvements will decrease the vulnerability of Delta water supplies to disruption by natural disasters, such as, earthquakes, floods, and levee failures.

The Delta Plan includes specific recommendations urging:

- The timely completion of BDCP in a manner compliant with the Delta Reform Act (WR R12).
- The timely completion of large surface storage studies for purposes of moving forward with decisionmaking (WR R13).
- The timely completion of the SWRCB's development, implementation, and enforcement of new and updated flow objectives for the Delta to help achieve the coequal goals (ER R1).
- Identification of smaller near-term implementable storage and conveyance projects (WR R14).
- That the SWRCB's decisions regarding new water rights or changes in the place or purpose of use or change in point of diversion that would result in a new or increased long-term average use of water from the Delta watershed consider and act consistently with applicable state policies including reduced reliance on the Delta (Water Code Section 85021), the constitutional principle of reasonable use and the public trust doctrine (Water Code Section 85023), and area of origin protections (Water Code Section 85031) (WR R3).
- The protection of water quality to support, enhance and protect beneficial uses and clear identification of water quality impacts by a covered action (WQ R1 and WQ R2).