

2015/2016 Delta Flood Preparedness – Anticipating the Effects of an El Niño Year

Summary: This presentation is to inform the Council about the potential for flood conditions in the upcoming water year and to provide an assessment of the Delta's flood readiness. This discussion will highlight the use of non-structural measures for flood risk reduction in the Delta region and is intended to be useful as the Council continues to develop the Delta Levees Investment Strategy.

Council staff has invited panel members representing Yolo County's Office of Emergency Services, San Joaquin County's Office of Emergency Services, the California Office of Emergency Services, and the Department of Water Resources to provide information and insights on possible El Niño conditions for the year ahead and measures to reduce risk related to flooding in the Delta.

Background

In order to meet the Delta Reform Act's requirement that "*the Delta Plan shall attempt to reduce risk to people, property, and state interests in the Delta by promoting effective emergency preparedness, appropriate land uses, and strategic levee investments*" (Water Code section 85305 (a)), the Council must consider the role and track activities of key federal, state and local agencies responsible for flood emergency preparedness, response and recovery in the Delta. The Delta Plan's regulatory policy **RR P1 (Prioritization of State Investments in Delta Levees and Risk Reduction)** and recommendation **RR R1 (Implement Emergency Preparedness and Response)** include measures and actions focused on promoting effective emergency preparedness and response for the Delta.

Council members have emphasized that Delta flood risk reduction means more than just levee improvements and maintenance. The Council's *Delta Flood Management Investment Strategy Principles* state, "A State Investment Strategy that achieves the desired goals and is cost-effective must start by evaluating all flood protection alternatives, and how they might help achieve the coequal goals. It cannot start and end with an evaluation of levees only."

Lastly, with respect to future updates of the Delta Plan, Water Code section 85305(b) states "the Council may incorporate into the Delta Plan the emergency preparedness and response strategies for the Delta developed by the California Emergency Management Agency."

Today's Briefing

This briefing is intended to provide Council members with additional information regarding ongoing emergency preparedness and response activities and allow for discussion of any additional measures being taken in the Delta to prepare for possible El Niño conditions.

Staff has organized a panel of representatives from multiple local and state agencies to inform the Council about coordination efforts among agencies and their thoughts on the most effective forms of non-structural risk reduction measures. Members of the panel include:

- **Dana Carey**, Manager, Yolo County Office of Emergency Services
- **Michael Cockrell**, Director of Emergency Operations; San Joaquin County Office of Emergency Services
- **Al Lehenbauer**, Deputy Regional Administrator, Inland Region California; Office of Emergency Services (CalOES)
- **John Paasch**, Division of Flood Management Chief; Department of Water Resources (DWR)

Staff has provided the following questions to panel members as suggested topics for their presentations:

- How well prepared are Delta agencies for the 2015-2016 flood season?
- Have there been any new developments in Delta emergency preparedness in terms of preparing for threats influenced by El Niño conditions? Some scientists believe that unusually warm surface waters off the West Coast combined with El Niño could cause baseline water levels to be elevated 8-11 inches this fall through spring. What are your thoughts on how this will impact the Delta including its levees?
- What do you believe are the most effective non-structural emergency preparedness measures (e.g., emergency response plans, training, evacuation planning, public education, structure flood-proofing, pre-positioning flood fight supplies, etc.) to reduce risk to people, property and other State interests in the Delta?
- What is the status of DWR grants awarded to Delta entities for emergency preparedness and what are some of the benefits that have been gained? What is the status of key emergency planning programs and documents such as DWR's Emergency Preparedness Response and Recovery Program or the Delta Flood Emergency Management Plan?
- Can the coordination and planning efforts between local flood agencies, CalOES, and DWR be improved? If so, how could the Council assist with this improvement?

During the panel's presentation or in follow-up discussion, the Council may wish to consider these additional questions:

- What has changed since the last major flood season in terms of emergency preparedness across agencies?

- How can the Council contribute to coordination of emergency preparedness in the Delta?
- How can this information be used in the development of a Delta flood risk reduction strategy?

Staff Recommendations for Next Steps

1. Use outcomes of this panel discussion to guide direction for Council's work to address Water Code section 85305(a) related to effective emergency preparedness.
2. The Council may provide needed assistance and coordination to participating agencies as these needs are clearly identified.
3. Continue to investigate Delta flood risk reduction measures in addition to levee improvements.

Contact

Dustin Jones
Supervising Engineer

Phone: (916) 445-5891