
State Water Resources Control Board

TO: Mark Cowin, Director
Department of Water Resources
1416 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

FROM: Thomas Howard
Executive Director

DATE:

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN
UPDATING DELTA OUTFLOW OBJECTIVE

I am writing to request additional information and assistance from the Department of Water Resources (DWR) in the State Water Resources Control Board's (State Water Board) efforts to update the Delta outflow objectives included in the Board's Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (Bay-Delta Plan). As you are aware, the State Water Board is currently undertaking a process to update the Bay-Delta Plan to ensure the reasonable protection of beneficial uses of water in the Bay-Delta. As part of the State Water Board's Phase II process to update the Bay-Delta Plan, State Water Board staff will be proposing modifications to the Delta outflow objectives and the associated program of implementation, including the method for calculating Delta outflow referred to as the Net Delta Outflow Index (NDOI).

Net Delta outflow is strongly influenced by depletions and accretions within the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. When the existing Delta outflow objectives were first adopted in the 1995 Bay-Delta Plan, the best available estimates of gross channel depletions in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta were those developed for the DAYFLOW program, so these were used in the definition of NDOI (1995 Bay-Delta Plan at page 25). The 1995 Bay-Delta Plan indicated that DWR was in the process of developing new channel depletion estimates that would be used in lieu of DAYFLOW once available (see footnote 2 on page 25 of the 1995 Bay-Delta Plan). State Water Board Decision 1641 (as revised March 15, 2000), which assigned responsibility for implementing the Delta outflow objectives and other Bay-Delta Plan objectives, reiterated this statement (page 190, footnote 2). The 2006 Bay-Delta Plan continues to require that DAYFLOW channel depletion estimates be used if new estimates were not available (2006 Bay Delta Plan, figure 4, page 20, footnote 2). In the past twenty years new depletion estimates have not been incorporated into the NDOI calculation nor have other potential needed improvements to the NDOI calculation been made.

FELICIA MARCUS, CHAIR | THOMAS HOWARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The current drought, as well as numerous technical reports and publications, have demonstrated the need to better estimate Delta outflows, including associated depletions and accretions in the Delta, for multiple critical purposes including water supply availability, expected water quality conditions, and protection of beneficial uses. The State Water Board requests DWR's technical assistance with this effort. Specifically, we request that DWR provide its best available estimates of Delta consumptive uses and channel depletions, the data and methods underlying those estimates, and a recommended method for estimating net Delta outflow in real time on a daily time scale. In light of the critically important purposes for which this information is needed, we request that DWR provide the above information within 60 days and that DWR provide any needed technical assistance evaluating and applying this information.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this important undertaking. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Matt Holland at (916) 341-5947 or matthew.holland@waterboards.ca.gov, or Diane Riddle at (916) 341-5297 or diane.riddle@waterboards.ca.gov.

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