



DELTA STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

A California State Agency

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The Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta is the grand confluence of California's waters, the place where the state's largest rivers merge in a web of channels—and in a maze of controversy. The Delta is a zone where the wants of a modern society come into collision with each other and with the stubborn limitations of a natural system. In 2009, seeking an end to decades of conflict over water, the Legislature established the Delta Stewardship Council with a mandate to resolve long-standing issues. The first step toward that resolution is the document you have before you, the Delta Plan.

Delta Plan, Executive Summary, 2013

Dear Governor Brown, Senators Steinberg and Huff, Speaker Perez and Assembly Member Conway:

In 2009, California's elected leadership approved a package of bills designed to solve statewide issues of water supply reliability and to guarantee a restored Delta ecosystem. Commonly called the "Coequal Goals", you set new policy for the people of California.

Among many other things, the legislation created the Delta Stewardship Council and directed us to adopt and implement a comprehensive – and enforceable – sustainable management plan to achieve the coequal goals. We are pleased to forward to you the final Delta Plan, adopted unanimously by the Council in May 2013.

The unique nature of the 2009 bill package cannot be overstated. A reliable supply of water and an improved and restored Delta ecosystem are legally equal in importance. State law now requires we "...reduce reliance on the Delta in meeting California's future water supply needs...", through statewide improvements in local and regional water supplies and local and regional water efficiency, all encouraged by prudent state investments to help make that possible.

Finally, the new legislative direction included statutory authority for the Council over 'covered actions' – plans, programs and/or projects that must be consistent with the Delta Plan. It is no surprise that some would prefer not to be required to help achieve the Coequal Goals. Nevertheless, accountability is the cornerstone for progress on the linked issues of a reliable supply of water and the Delta's deteriorating ecosystem.

Forged through eight drafts, hundreds of hours of public meetings and thousands of public comments over two years, the Delta Plan is guided by the best available science. Although State law requires state and local agencies to be consistent with the Delta Plan, it is founded on cooperation and coordination, in addition to the regulatory authority spelled out in the Delta Reform Act.

"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."

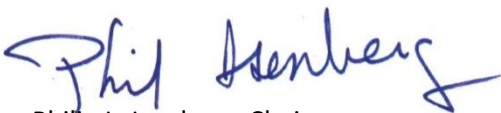
– CA Water Code §85054

The Delta Plan builds on work by the Department of Water Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the State Water Resources Control Board. Collectively, its required policies and numerous recommendations:

- Reduce reliance on water from the Delta by requiring those who take water from, transfer water through, or use water in the Delta to describe and certify that they are using all feasible options to use water efficiently and to develop additional local and regional water supplies.
- Identify ways to improve statewide water supply reliability throughout California by calling for state investments in improved local and regional supplies and water use efficiency. The Plan also calls for improved Delta conveyance and expansion of groundwater and surface storage.
- Protect, restore and enhance the Delta ecosystem by designating six high priority locations in the Delta and Suisun Marsh to recover endangered species, rebuild salmon runs and enhance habitat for wildlife. The Plan also prioritizes actions to reduce pollution, ensure improved water quality and limit invasive species, while moving to establish a more natural pattern of water flows in the Delta.
- Protect the uniqueness of the California Delta by preserving rural lands for agriculture and habitat use, and requiring that new residential, commercial or industrial development is located in areas currently designated for urban use.
- Reduce risks to people, property, and state interests in the Delta by prohibiting encroachment on floodways and floodplains, requiring a minimum level of flood protection for new residential development of five or more parcels, and committing to develop priorities for state investment in Delta flood protection by 2015.
- Integrate governmental actions and the best available science through both regulatory policies and non-binding recommendations.
- Call for swift and successful completion of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, which seeks to modernize the existing water conveyance system, and improve the health of the estuary. If the BDCP meets the requirements of law it will be incorporated into the Delta Plan.

If much of the Delta Plan sounds familiar, it is because water and environmental leaders and scientists have been recommending such a comprehensive and balanced approach for decades. That said, the history of modern American government is replete with multiple federal, state and local agencies pursuing their own separate legal agendas. Pulling those agencies together and organizing around common elements is extraordinarily difficult, but essential. The Delta Plan provides the framework and starts that process.

Sincerely,



Philip L. Isenberg, Chair
Encl.