

LOCAL AGENCIES OF THE NORTH DELTA

1010 F Street, Suite 100, Sacramento, CA 95814

September 16, 2013

SENT VIA EMAIL (science@deltacouncil.ca.gov)

Dr. Peter Goodwin
Lead Scientist, Delta Science Program
Delta Stewardship Council
980 Ninth Street, Suite 1500
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: LAND Comments on the Second Draft Delta Science Plan (August 22, 2013)

Dear Dr. Goodwin:

Local Agencies of the North Delta¹ (“LAND”) provides the following comments on the Second Draft Delta Science Plan (“Plan”). LAND member agencies and local communities are the primary landowners and land managers for the implementation of science in the north Delta. The proposed “restoration” of vast areas of the Delta currently in agricultural and related uses will have far-reaching impacts on local communities, and potentially inadvertent ecological effects. These comments are offered in support of the sound application of science to the factual realities of the Delta, as a working environment in a complex matrix of ecological and social values.

Overall, the Plan is a useful planning document to coordinate and inform Delta science as it transitions from the CALFED and *ad hoc* management models currently in place. The Plan is wide ranging, and integrative, but not as explicitly inclusive of riparian and terrestrial ecosystems and processes as a Delta-wide plan should be.

The Plan is a process-oriented blueprint, which is of critical importance towards moving the state of Delta science forward. To ultimately advance the goals of the Plan, however, a specific action-orientation of applied science also needs to be articulated. The

¹ LAND is a coalition comprised of local reclamation and water agencies in the northern geographic area of the Delta. LAND member agencies cover an approximately 90,000 acre area of the northern geographic area of the Delta; current LAND participants include Reclamation Districts 3, 150, 307, 317, 407, 551, 554, 755, 813, 999, 1002, 2067 and the Brannan-Andrus Levee Maintenance District. Some of these agencies provide both water delivery and drainage services, while others only provide drainage services. These districts also assist in the maintenance of the levees that provide flood protection to homes and farms.

actions can be as basic as specifically examining potential mechanisms for invasive *Corbula/Corbicula* control, to as complex as developing multi-parameter models that use real-time data to manage water releases from the reservoirs to manage water quality and eliminate ramping effects. The Plan could lead to intermediate-scale studies and management actions that can assess the *in situ* effects of various treatments to move the ecological theory into practice, something that has yet to occur in the Delta.

Despite the many positive elements and its comprehensive scope, the Plan should be revised to more specifically reference the statutory bases and definitions in the Plan pertaining to social impacts as well as what it means to have a “healthy ecosystem.” The Plan should also explicitly address the previously absent social element of Delta science.

The statutory basis of the Plan is summarized obliquely in the Executive Summary and not accurately described elsewhere. The Plan solely exists because of the authority expressed in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009, and specifically, Water Code section 85280. While the Plan appears to track section 85280 diligently through the development of a Delta Science Program, some important statutory direction ultimately gets lost in the Plan.

Specifically, the Plan does not address the mandate that the coequal goals 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.” (Water Code, § 29702.) Despite this clear mandate, the Plan lacks any substantive discussion of the cultural, recreational, and agricultural values of the Delta. The best scientific approach to study and ultimately achieve success in meeting the goal of “protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem,” must fully understand, integrate and work within the social and economic human environment currently in the Delta. The Delta is not a remote, relatively intact ecosystem, but instead is a highly managed landscape with multiple stakeholders; this fact is inadequately acknowledged in this Plan. The Plan should describe the stakeholders, and specifically provide for social, recreational and agricultural scientists to inform and implement the Plan.

The short-hand use of “healthy ecosystem” in the Executive Summary (and elsewhere) also points to the need to more precisely implement the full definition established by statute. Water Code section 85302 defines the specific characteristics of a healthy ecosystem; section 85020 also has numerous examples of additional definitions relevant to this policy. In order to fully implement the statute, the Plan must address the statute’s specific definition of a healthy ecosystem, including the social, riparian, and terrestrial communities.

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With greater inclusion of the statutory direction and definitions, a broader multi-disciplinary science team approach, and an action orientation, the Plan can significantly advance the state of the Delta science.

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Thank you for considering these comments. If there are questions regarding the comments, please contact me at (916) 853-9293, extension 112 or at eringelberg@bskinc.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Erik Ringelberg', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Erik Ringelberg
Natural Resources and
Land Planning Group Manager
BSK Associates

cc: Chris Knopp, Executive Officer of the Delta Stewardship Council (sent via email to chris.knopp@deltacouncil.ca.gov)