

LO229 LAND



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February 2, 2012

VIA EMAIL: eircomments@deltacouncil.ca.gov

Delta Stewardship Council
980 Ninth Street, Suite 1500
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Comments on Delta Plan Draft Program EIR

Dear Sir or Madam:

These comments on the Draft Delta Plan Program Environmental Impact Report (“DEIR”) are submitted on behalf of Local Agencies of the North Delta (“LAND”), which is a coalition comprised of reclamation and water districts covering more than 70,000 acres in the northern geographic area of the Delta.¹ LAND participant agencies have concerns about how the Delta Plan (“Plan”) will impact the reliability and quality of water supplies within the Delta, the provision of water according to established water rights, and/or, drainage and flood control services to landowners within their respective districts, and wish to consult with the Delta Stewardship Council (“Council”) on these and related issues. (Water Code, § 85300, subd. (b).)

LO229-1

In reviewing the voluminous DEIR, which attempts to analyze the environmental impacts of implementation of the policies and recommendations of the Draft Delta Plan (“Draft Plan”), it is apparent that the Draft Plan is a missed opportunity to address the fundamental issues facing the Delta ecosystem and the state’s water supply. In particular, the Council has failed to implement the statutory requirements of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009 (“SB 7x1”). Only by correcting the deficiencies of the Draft Plan itself could environmental review meeting the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21000 et seq.) be conducted. While significant public resources have already been expended to analyze a Draft Plan that does not meet the Council’s obligations under SB 7x1, the Council still has the opportunity to correct these deficiencies in the next draft of the Delta Plan.

LO229-2

¹ LAND participants include: Reclamation Districts 3, 150, 307, 349, 551, 554, 755, 813, 999 and 1002. 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.

Response to comment LO229-1

Comment noted.

Response to comment LO229-2

Comment noted.

These comments are divided into two parts: (1) a discussion of key areas of the Draft Plan that must be revised for consistency with SB 7x1; and (2) a discussion of the adequacy of key aspects of the DEIR in analyzing the Draft Plan.

I. CONTINUING CONCERNS REGARDING THE DELTA PLAN ITSELF

LAND has submitted comments on each of the five drafts of the Delta Plan. While we appreciate the changes that were made to the draft plan to address the concerns of LAND and other local stakeholders, there are still several areas in which the Delta Plan fails to comply with the statutory mandates of SB 7x1. These flaws permeate, and in some cases nullify, the analysis in the DEIR, and are therefore discussed below, prior to LAND's specific comments on the DEIR itself.

The following are fatal flaws from the Fifth Draft Plan:

- Overstatements of worst-case seismic risk as a justification for conveyance, and permanent restrictions on Delta development and agriculture;
- Severe development limits keyed off of unrealistic levee standards, even in agricultural areas, and for levee repairs;
- Preference for setback levees, without any technical justification, precluding other engineering and more cost-effective solutions, and mandating review requirements;
- Creation of an unnecessary new reclamation district ("RD") oversight entity that would assess fees and take over levee maintenance and repair funding with no local accountability;
- New water diversions for use *within the Delta* must inexplicably demonstrate the evaluation and implementation of all of other water supply alternatives even though the Delta is the local water supply;
- Failure to include incentives for sustainable agricultural practices that improve water quality and have species benefits;
- Failure to protect the sustainability of Delta Legacy towns, and agriculture, and precluding the flexibility to allow it to evolve;
- Failure to require endowments for habitat projects;
- Failure to require willing sellers for habitat land acquisitions;
- Failure to acknowledge impacts on local communities and RDs from the Plan;
- Failure to objectively assess options other than new conveyance, and to provide general guidance regarding the types of conveyance options that would meet the co-equal goals; and,
- Failure to explicitly define what constitutes a covered action and to provide a clear pathway for local governments and landowners to make consistency determinations.

Response to comment LO229-3

This is a comment on the project, not on the EIR.

Further details of these inadequacies are discussed in LAND's comments on the 5th Draft Delta Plan.

A. The Delta Plan and DEIR Inadequately Implements SB7x1 Pertaining to Delta as a Place

This DEIR begins with a biased and novel interpretation of SB 7x1, in effect ignoring the statutory language that protects the Delta and its human inhabitants, and implementing the language that favors those that rely on exported water supplies. According to SB7x1, the goals of the state for the Delta are:

- (a) Achieve the two coequal 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.
- (b) Protect, maintain, and, where possible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Delta environment, including, but not limited to, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and recreational activities.
- (c) Ensure orderly, balanced conservation and development of Delta land resources.
- (d) Improve flood protection by structural and nonstructural means to ensure an increased level of public health and safety.

(Water Code, § 29702.)

These legal requirements were inexplicably reduced to a shorthand version that lacks the same emphasis, clarity, and statutory content:

- ◆ Creating a more reliable water supply for California ("Reliable Water Supply")
- ◆ Restoring the Delta ecosystem ("Delta Ecosystem Restoration")
- ◆ Improving water quality ("Water Quality Improvement")
- ◆ Reducing flood risk in the Delta ("Flood Risk Reduction")
- ◆ Protecting and enhancing the unique cultural, recreational, natural resources and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place ("Delta-As-Place Enhancement")

(DEIR, p. ES-2.)

The original statutory language and emphasis should have been retained, and the Draft Plan and DEIR will fails to follow the statute until this is reconciled. This thematic

Response to comment LO229-4

Please refer to Master Response 2.

LO229-3

LO229-4

re-emphasis outside of the statutory language is pervasive and consistent. Further examples of this ad-hoc reinterpretation follow immediately in the DEIR text in the provided examples:

- ◆ Reliable Water Supply: New or expanded reservoirs, groundwater production facilities (wells and pipelines), ocean desalination facilities, and recycled water facilities
- ◆ Delta Ecosystem Restoration: Invasive species management (e.g., vegetation removal), and restoration/creation of floodplains, riparian areas, and tidal marsh
- ◆ Water Quality Improvement: New or expanded water, wastewater, storm water, and agricultural runoff treatment plants; new or expanded facilities to improve the quality of well water, such as wellhead treatment and new recharge and monitoring wells
- ◆ Flood Risk Reduction: New setback levees; maintenance, repair and modification of existing levees; floodplain expansion; dredging
- ◆ Delta-As-Place Enhancement: In the Delta, construction of new or expanded parks, trails, marinas, bike lanes and wildlife enjoyment facilities; additional retail and restaurants in Delta legacy towns to support tourism

(DEIR, pp. ES-2 to ES-3.)

This laundry list of structural projects is apparently intended to demonstrate where the potential impacts to the environment are likely to come from, and in that manner it could be considered consistent with CEQA. However, the same list also demonstrates the bias against the statutory cultural and agriculture values as described earlier. Immediately contradicting itself, the DEIR specifies that a complete list should not even be inferred: "The EIR evaluates types of physical actions rather than an exclusive list of physical actions, because the Delta Plan does not propose or encourage any such specific list nor can one be inferred." (DEIR, p. ES-2) This approach of refusing to define the projects that would be specifically included under covered actions on one hand and then providing another list, and then stating that list is not complete is inconsistent with CEQA. "An accurate project description is necessary for an intelligent evaluation of the potential environmental effects of a proposed activity." (*McQueen v. Board of Directors* (1988) 202 Cal.App.3d 1136, 1143.)

Not only is the DEIR internally inconsistent and incomplete, the examples and purported analysis it does provide are often counterfactual and unsupported. For example:

Response to comment LO229-5

This is a comment on the project, not on the EIR.

LO229-4

LO229-5

- More wells will not provide a more reliable water supply for California. Most accessible groundwater aquifers are overdrafted, many are contaminated, and several are mined to the point that they are not economically usable. (See, e.g., USGS Groundwater information, available at: <http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/1323/> (United States groundwater availability) <http://pubs.usgs.gov/pp/1766/> (Central Valley groundwater availability).
- No support is provided for the assumption that creation of an artificial tidal marsh will protect, restore, and enhance the Delta ecosystem. Moreover, no demonstrably ecologically positive benefits are described that would occur from such restoration.
- Construction of a new park does not meet the requirement to protect, maintain, and, where possible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Delta environment, including, but not limited to, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and recreational activities. Though it could meet the very last recreational element of "Delta-As-Place Enhancement," that is unlikely given that the State is already closing or considering closing virtually all of the existing State parks in the Delta.

B. Goals and Policies that Promote Delta Culture and Agriculture are Missing

The most obvious and egregious reinterpretation of the statute is that the co-equal goals were to be tempered by the following: "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." Instead, the *requirement* that shall be achieved is now is just an "element" of a subcategory, "Delta-As-Place Enhancement," focused on recreation and tourism. (DEIR, p. ES-2.)

This subcategory is implemented solely through six recommendations, none of which do anything to directly promote agriculture. (DEIR, App. C at pp. C-1 18 to C-19, DP R-1 to R-6.) Indeed, the only recommendation that even mentions agriculture is simply an admonition to the Delta Protection Commission regarding the inclusion of planning for "continued socioeconomic sustainability of Delta agriculture" in the Economic Sustainability Plan. (DP R-1.) This reinterpretation of the law disregards the clearly delineated legislative intent in the language of SB 7x1.

LAND and others have made several specific suggestions regarding the ways in which agriculture, which is unquestionably the primary economic driver in the Delta,²

² For example, "from 2002 to 2009, agriculture accounted for almost 58 percent of total employment in the region" according to the. (See Delta Protection Commission's

Response to comment LO229-6

This is a comment on the project, not on the EIR. Recommendations from commenters on the Fifth Staff Draft Delta Plan were considered by the Council in the development of the Revised Project which was analyzed in the Recirculated Draft Program EIR.

LO229-5

LO229-6

can be protected and enhanced. The Draft Plan and DEIR, however, do not include any policies to protect and enhance Delta agriculture, such as:

- Promotion of special agricultural districts;
- Creation of a Delta and/or Legacy Community “brand” to enhance public awareness of Delta agricultural products and cultural experience opportunities;
- Development of measurable targets for reaching agricultural sustainability;
- Creating streamlining of local, state and federal permitting requirements for agriculture and related projects in the Delta (in fact the Delta Plan does just the opposite by creating a new and incomprehensible layer of regulation over agricultural activities in the Delta);
- Requiring that any conversion of farmland in the Delta be mitigated by permanently protecting other farmland in the Delta; and
- Precluding the use of eminent domain on private farmland.

LO229-6

With respect to the vast threat of farmland conversion that would occur under the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (“BDCP”), the fifth bullet under ER R2 refers only to development of a plan and a protocol for acquiring necessary land for ecosystem restoration. (DEIR, App. C, p. C-101.) This is inadequate to address the concerns regarding use of eminent domain for habitat projects. As explained in previous LAND comments, a sub-recommendation is needed to preclude use of eminent domain for habitat projects. Local Habitat Conservation Plans (“HCPs”) do not allow condemnation of land for the simple reason that these lands are already managed effectively by local residents and their support is needed to maintain the conservation benefits.

In other major HCPs, FWS has committed to not to use eminent domain for purposes of habitat restoration. A sub-recommendation should be added to preclude use of eminent domain for habitat projects. Local Habitat Conservation Plans (“HCPs”) do not allow condemnation of land for the simple reason that these lands are already managed effectively by local residents and their support is needed to maintain the conservation benefits. Consistent with this practice, FWS has recently committed to not use of eminent domain in the Everglades Headwaters restoration project. (See <http://www.npr.org/2011/09/12/140403285/agency-takes-new-approach-to-save-everglades-land>; see also <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/greatereverglades/pdf/GEPProjectProposal.pdf>.)

LO229-7

The consequences of taking private land for “public” benefit are dire. First, there are the obvious, and unanalyzed potential ecological impacts: Who will hold that land, and will it go to a non-profit who has invested in promoting the BDCP, for instance?

Economic Sustainability Plan, at p. 31, available at:
http://www.delta.ca.gov/res/docs/ESP_1_12.pdf.)

Response to comment LO229-7

Implementation of ER R2 under the Delta Plan is not related to implementation of the BDCP which is a reasonably foreseeable future project that is being evaluated by the Department of Water Resources as the CEQA lead agency. The cumulative impacts of the proposed Delta Plan, in combination with the impact of the proposed BDCP, are described in EIR Sections 22 and 23 of the EIR. ER R2 also does not call for the use of eminent domain. Accordingly, it would be inappropriately speculative for the EIR to address the indirect physical impacts referenced in the comment at this time.

Who will manage that land for invasive plants and animals? How will they manage that land? Will there be an endowment to cover the costs of managing that land for fire, invasives, trespass, and special district fees in perpetuity? Given the track record of “restorations” in the Delta and the lack of any analysis of the actual ecological benefits and harms, this element alone requires significant additional description and analysis.

LO229-7

Secondly, the DEIR also fails entirely to analyze the potential impacts of the project according to its statutory mandate: Will forced conversion of farmland reduce the “critical mass” of farmland necessary for the economic survival of Delta or island agricultural economy? Taking property not only affect the lives of individuals, but also the ways in which the community is organized. At what point will the community fragmentation continue through these takings that the community’s identify has been lost? How will the created habitat locations and juxtaposition not intensify income segregation and economic disparities between and among Delta communities? How will the Plan land use regulations that aim at curbing land development not raise housing prices, making housing less affordable to middle- and low-income households, crippling the Delta unique cultural, recreational, natural resources and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place?

LO229-8

These issues must be addressed in the Delta Plan in order to meet the statutory mandates of SB 7x1.

II. SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE ANALYSIS IN THE DEIR

A. The DEIR’s Thresholds of Significance are not Appropriately Tailored to the Project

CEQA encourages lead agencies to develop and publish thresholds of significance. (CEQA Guidelines, § 15064.7.) Even if a lead agency does not formally adopt thresholds of significance, it must develop thresholds that assist it in evaluating the environmental impacts of a given project. (See, e.g., *Oakland Heritage Alliance v. City of Oakland* (2011) 195 Cal. App. 4th 884, 899.) The DEIR for the Draft Plan, however, refers primarily to the sample questions contained in Appendix G of the Guidelines without regard to the types of impacts most likely to occur in the geographic area affected by implementation of the project.

LO229-9

Appendix G “is only an illustrative checklist and does not set forth an exhaustive list of potentially significant environmental impacts under CEQA or standards of significance for those impacts.” (*City of San Diego v. Board of Trustees of California State University* (2011) 201 Cal. App. 4th 1134, 1189-1192 (*San Diego*), citing *Protect the Historic Amador Waterways v. Amador Water Agency* (2004) 116 Cal. App. 4th 1099, 1110-1111.) In the *San Diego* case, the court struck down an EIR for failing to consider the effect of a project on a transit system despite the fact that appendix G does

Response to comment LO229-8

Mitigation Measure 7-1 requires the protection of farmland equivalent in size to farmland removed from production with implementation of Delta Plan activities. It includes a provision requiring the establishment of buffer areas between projects and adjacent agricultural land that are sufficient to protect and maintain land capability and agricultural operation flexibility. The purpose of this measure is to recognize the potential indirect effects of converting agricultural lands to a nonagricultural use, including effects on adjacent or nearby agricultural lands. With implementation of this measure, where indirect effects would occur, a buffer sufficient to avoid causing an adverse impact on adjacent agricultural lands would be required. However, in response to this comment, please see text change(s) in Section 5 of this FEIR.

Response to comment LO229-9

Please refer to Master Response 2.

not list a threshold relating to that impact. (201 Cal. App. 4th at 1191-1192.) Moreover, the lack of precise quantification or criteria for determining whether an environmental effect is “significant” under CEQA does not excuse a lead agency from using its best efforts to evaluate whether an effect is significant.” (*San Diego, supra*, citing *Berkeley Keep Jets Over the Bay Com. v. Board of Port Cmrs.* (2001) 91 Cal. App. 4th 1344, 1370; see also CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15144, 15145.)

The DEIR primarily relies on Appendix G for its thresholds of significance, despite the fact that the project has the potential for wide-reaching and unique impacts. For instance, with respect to Flood Risk, the DEIR analyzes the potential of the project to create run-off water which could exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems (See, e.g., DEIR, p. 5-36, 5-39, 5-46.) In reality, the project has the potential to impact the ability to maintain agricultural drainage systems, including maintenance of the water table at an appropriate level for crops. For most of the Delta, which is rural, conventional stormwater collection and disposal is a non-issue. Given the large-scale proposals to change the hydrology in the Delta through habitat and tidal marsh creation, a threshold to directly address potential impacts associated with agricultural drainage should have been included in the DEIR. If that had been done, the potential impacts of projects implemented under the Delta Plan could actually be analyzed.

One the other hand, the Water Resources analysis deviates from the Appendix G checklist by stating that a significant effect would occur if the project would “Substantially change water supply availability to water users located outside the Delta that use Delta water.” (DEIR, p. 3-77, italics added.) The language in SB 7x1, however, clearly refers to providing “a more reliable water supply for California” not just users of Delta water located outside of the Delta. (Water Code, § 29702, subd. (a), italics added.) There is no basis for the decision to only analyze impacts to water users only outside the Delta and this is inconsistent with the statutory mandate to “[p]rotect, maintain, and, where possible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Delta environment, including . . . agriculture” (Water Code, § 29702, subd. (b).)

SB 7x1 requires the Council to ensure that: “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. (b) Protect, maintain, and, where possible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Delta environment, including, but not limited to, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and recreational activities. (c) Ensure orderly, balanced conservation and development of Delta land resources.” Each of these requirements should be individual thresholds of significance for the associated plan element analyzed in the DEIR. Yet, again, these legislative mandates are given lip service in the introduction and then not used for either detailed analysis or to place the

LO229-9

LO229-10

LO229-11

Response to comment LO229-10

The EIR addresses drainage in several sections. The impacts associated with maintaining drainage systems are discussed in Section 5. The impacts associated with high groundwater levels that would cause further drainage issues are discussed in Section 11. For example, the Draft Program EIR described in subsection 11.5.3.2.6 that implementation of the Delta Plan would result in significant adverse impact of high groundwater. See also Master Response 2.

Response to comment LO229-11

The EIR’s thresholds of significance are based on Appendix G to the CEQA Guidelines. Appendix G’s thresholds include XVI(d): “Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?” This was modified for the present EIR, as the Delta Plan is not a project that would be served by a water supply. Instead, it may impact suppliers’ ability to provide water for existing projects. Thus, the EIR considers whether the Delta Plan would “substantially change water supply availability to water users that use Delta water.” The thresholds in Appendix G, section II, Agricultural Resources, are used essentially in the form they are provided in Appendix G with only minor changes in wording. Please also see Master Response 2.

DEIR actions into statutory context. In order to be adequate, the DEIR's thresholds of significance must be tailored to the project and follow these and other statutory mandates.

B. The DEIR's Approach to Analysis of Impacts Associated with the BDCP is Flawed

The Draft Plan continues to blindly promote completion of the BDCP as a panacea for the problems of the Delta (DEIR, App. C, ER R8) and includes policies and recommendations that will directly guide the habitat creation related conservation measures in the BDCP (DEIR, App. C, ER P1 to P5 and ER R1 to R7). However a full discussion of the BDCP is relegated to its own stand alone chapter. (DEIR, Chapter 23.)

The Draft Plan also fails to include any policies or recommendations relating to the conveyance component of BDCP. Given the numerous policies relating to the habitat creation components of the BDCP (DEIR, App. C, ER P1 to P5 and ER R1 to R8), it is untenable for the Council to avoid providing any guidance whatsoever on the issue of conveyance. As discussed in previous LAND comments, just like habitat, the Council should describe what type of conveyance projects meet the statutory mandate of SB 7x1.

Moreover, with respect to the DEIR's analysis, the conveyance component of the BDCP has more potential to cause significant impacts in the Delta than any other project mentioned in the DEIR. Yet the analysis within the DEIR scarcely mentions the potential effects of BDCP conveyance, instead relegating details regarding BDCP to its own chapter that contains no discussion of the potential of the Delta Plan to result in environmental impacts associated with BDCP. The DEIR also carefully ignores the likely impacts of the BDCP and other likely early-term projects in each of the individual other chapters, biasing the analysis.

Rather than address BDCP conveyance as a probable future project, the DEIR names four seemingly random water supply reliability projects: Delta Offstream Storage Investigation, Los Vaqueros Reservoir Project - Phase 2, the Upper San Joaquin River Basin Storage Investigation Plan, and the next update of the Department of Water Resources (DWR) Bulletin 118 California's Groundwater. (DEIR, p. 2A-5.) This is despite the fact that the BDCP development process has been underway since 2006 and a second Notice of Preparation for the project, including a description of the conveyance component, was issued for the BDCP in 2009. Notably, the DEIR's discussion of surface water intakes (see, e.g., DEIR, p. 2A7-8), which would certainly be part of the BDCP, does not even mention the BDCP.

Shoving analysis of the BDCP as it relates to implementation of the Delta Plan under the rug thwarts the public disclosure requirements of CEQA. The failure to proceed in a manner required by law standard of review applies when a lead agency fails to include relevant information in its environmental analysis. A lead agency's failure to

LO229-11

LO229-12

Response to comment LO229-12

The proposed BDCP is a reasonably foreseeable future project that is being evaluated by the Department of Water Resources as the CEQA lead agency. The cumulative impacts of the proposed Delta Plan, in combination with the impact of the proposed BDCP, are described in EIR Sections 22 and 23. In addition, the Delta Plan must be reviewed at least once every five years and may be revised as the Council deems appropriate pursuant to Water Code section 85300(c). Hence, the Delta Plan would be amended when the BDCP is ready for incorporation. Please refer to Master Response 1.

comply with informational disclosure requirements constitutes a prejudicial abuse of discretion when the omission of relevant information has precluded informed decisionmaking and informed public participation. (*Bakersfield Citizens for Local Control v. City of Bakersfield* (2004) 124 Cal.App.4th 1184, 1197-1198.)

The California Supreme Court has deemed that the omission of information is prejudicial unless such information omitted would be repetitive, irrelevant, or supportive of the agency's decision because courts are generally not in the position to assess the importance of omitted information. *Environmental Protection Info. Ctr. v. Dept. of Forestry* (2008) 44 Cal.4th 459, 487, citing Pub. Res. Code § 21005(b) and *Rural Land Owners Ass'n v. City Council* (1983) 143 Cal.App.3d 1013, 1021. Moreover, "[a]n EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences." (CEQA Guidelines, §15151; see also *Kings County Farm Bureau v. City of Hanford* (1990) 221 Cal.App.3d 692, 712.) Yet, a straightforward analysis of the potential impacts of the BDCP as it relates to implementation of the Delta Plan is absent from the DEIR

LO229-12

C. Mitigation for Agricultural Resources is Inadequate

Mitigation for farmland conversion may be imposed under CEQA. (CEQA Guidelines, § 15370.) While the DEIR includes a mitigation measure for agricultural land conversion, land conversion. To mitigate for loss of high value farmland in the Delta due to creation of habitat or other projects, the mitigation ratio must be higher than 1:1. At a 1:1 mitigation ratio, a net loss of farmland is still occurring. The mitigation ratio for conversion of agricultural land should be higher than 1:1 for prime farmland in the Delta and should be located within the Delta to ensure that the Delta's agricultural economy is maintained.

LO229-13

Such mitigation is feasible as demonstrated by existing agricultural mitigation ordinances in many jurisdictions. (See, e.g., City of Davis Mun. Code, § 40A.03.030: www.cityofdavis.org/cmo/citycode/ (requiring 2:1 mitigation); see also Yolo County Code, § 8-2.2416: <http://www.yolocounty.org/CountyCode/Title08.pdf>; City of Stockton Administrative Guidelines, § I.A.6; Ordinance Code of San Joaquin County, § 9-1080 et seq.) As an alternative to an enforceable mitigation measure, a policy could be created to implement the protection of the Delta as an evolving place.

D. The Greenhouse Gas Analysis is Inadequate

Just as one example of inadequate impact analysis within the DEIR, the Greenhouse Gas Analysis ("GHG") is flawed because it is presumed initially that proposed project would not have an impact: "The Proposed Project (Delta Plan) and

LO229-14

Response to comment LO229-13

In response to this comment, please see text change(s) in Section 5 of the FEIR. There is no evidentiary basis to suggest that the EIR's 1:1 target ratio is insufficient to mitigate the conversion of farmland, or that more than 1:1 would fully mitigate the impact to less than significant. Moreover, the target ratio allows local agencies to utilize a higher ratio, as the environmental circumstances dictate.

Response to comment LO229-14

The EIR concludes that the Delta Plan could have several significant impacts on emissions of greenhouse gases and climate change, including impacts 21-1a, 21-3a, 21-1b, 21-3b, 21-1c, 21-3c, 21-1d, 21-3d, 21-1e, and 21-3e. Please refer to Master Response 5.

alternatives would not directly result in construction or operation of projects or facilities, and therefore would result in no direct climate change or GHG emissions impacts. This subsection describes the assessment method approaches for GHG and climate change.” (DEIR, p. 21-6)

This is demonstrably erroneous as the Draft Plan specifies the support of specific policies and recommendations that use more energy and the production of GHGs than current conditions. Those policies and recommendations include construction of new water storage facilities, additional pumping, desalination, conveyance construction and operations; and, the creation of new habitat, which by definition will create more powerful GHG CO₂ equivalents through methane production. (See <http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1953751,00.html>.) The State water project is already one of the largest single users of energy in California, and electrical production sector is the second largest emitter of GHG in the State. (DEIR, p. 21-4.)

Yet, in a reversal of the initial description of assessment methods, the DEIR follows with a more realistic but meaningless description of the potential impacts of the project: “Based on the available examples, it is possible that GHG emissions impacts of projects encouraged by the Delta Plan may be less than significant, or could be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. The details of many of the aspects of these projects, however, are not currently known, and it is possible that significant and unavoidable impacts on GHG emissions could occur.” The lack of detail of the likely impacts of the proposed project and the confusing manner that it is described, as well as the all-encompassing language yet factually unsupported analysis, renders the DEIR incomplete and misleading.

For example, the text accurately does describe the following conditions: “Quantification of operational emissions would be too speculative at this program level because of unknown project details, localized variables, and operational considerations.” The inference however is that the project is analyzed in the DEIR. The DEIR does not bother to quantitatively or even qualitatively assess the likely effects of its plan, simply deferring, impermissibly, everything to the project level analysis. This error is replicated in essentially every chapter describing environmental impacts.

The growth-inducing characteristics associated with the plan and its promotion of conveyance, as well as the promoted increased reliability of water supplied to Southern California, without any plan to manage future water demands (or growth) or any analysis to support or reject this obvious consideration. For example, water transfers, which may or may not lead to any sort of reliability, (although this is inferred in the text) is purported not to have any impact on GHGs. “Water transfers and water use efficiency and conservation programs are also activities that could be encouraged by the Proposed

Response to comment LO229-15

As described in Section 2B of the Draft Program EIR and Master Response 2, the Delta Stewardship Council does not propose or contemplate directly authorizing any physical activities, including but not limited to construction or operation of infrastructure. Rather, through the Delta Plan, the Delta Stewardship Council seeks to influence the actions, activities, and/or projects of other agencies, the details of which would be under the jurisdiction and authority of the agencies that will propose them in the future and conduct future environmental review. Without specific details of future projects, it is not possible for the Delta Stewardship Council to develop quantitative thresholds of significance, conduct site-specific quantitative analyses, and design site-specific mitigation measures. Accordingly, in the absence of specific proposed physical projects, this EIR makes a good faith effort to disclose the potentially significant environmental effects of the types of projects that may be encouraged by the Delta Plan and to identify program-level mitigation measures. See also Master Response 5.

Response to comment LO229-16

Water transfers under the Delta Plan and other alternatives would be used to reduce reliance on the Delta. Energy previously used to convey water from the Delta to users outside of the Delta would be used to convey the transferred water to meet the water demands projected in the existing general plans. Please refer to Master Responses 2 and 5.

Project, but GHG emissions would not be expected from these activities.” Again, there is no analysis of any kind, simply demonstrably false assertions. How would a water transfer from northern to southern California not require pumping from the water projects at their intakes, transfer pumping over the Tehachapis, and then local distribution pumping, each with increased energy use and GHG emissions?

LO229-16

Indeed this flawed attempt at even *describing* the basis for the project impacts also fails to identify the role of GHGs from the proposed “habitat” creation. Nowhere does it describe the role of wetland formation of the GHGs, including methane -one of the most powerful GHG chemicals. The failure to understand even the most basic ecology and chemical dynamics of the Delta then leads to the failure to analyze the potential impacts of the project.

LO229-17

III. CONCLUSION

Thank you for considering these comments. Water and reclamation districts in the Delta are among the local stakeholders most affected by changes to land and water management in the Delta. LAND encourages the Council to properly implement the intent of the Delta Reform Act, including protecting and enhancing the Delta as a Place. While the 5th draft Plan and the DEIR are a good start, it needs more work before a proper environmental review can be conducted. LAND will continue to participate in the development of the Delta Plan to ensure that it meets the letter and intent of the law.

LO229-18

Very truly yours,

SOLURI MESERVE
A Law Corporation

By: 
Osha R. Meserve

Response to comment LO229-17

As described in subsection 21.5.3.2.1 of the EIR, implementation of ecosystem restoration habitat would result in significant adverse impacts to GHG emissions. See also response to comment LO229-15.

Response to comment LO229-18

Comment noted.