Draft
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Defining Water Supply Reliability

Improving the reliability of water supplies from the Delta means decreasing the vulnerability of Delta water supplies to disruption from natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes, sea level rise, floods and levee failures), and increasing the predictability of those supplies. Improving water supply reliability does not require increasing, or even maintaining current, levels of diversions. As a result, it is perfectly possible to increase the reliability of supplies from the Delta, reduce diversions, reduce reliance on Delta supplies and restore the Delta ecosystem.

This definition of reliability is reflected in the Council's November 15 letter to Byron Buck, which clearly confirmed that the mandate to reduce reliance on Delta supplies "includes all current water supply needs *as these needs will continue into the future"* (emphasis in the original). That letter also confirms that the legislature intended to "reform *current* unsustainable uses in the Delta" and that "(p)rudent and resilient management must seek to redesign the system in ways that allow for the probability of reduced exports." Finally, the letter concludes that "the legislature expects our water supply system, and the economy that relies on it, to be more resilient and <u>less reliant</u> on the Delta."

The Council can also work to "provide a more reliable water supply for California" (Water Code Sec. 29702(a)) through a focus on tools that are broader than a narrow focus on Delta water management. In developing water supply reliability recommendations that reach beyond the Delta, the Delta Plan should include provisions that reflects the following:

- It is not possible for the Delta alone to meet the state's water needs.
- The state's aquatic ecosystems and fisheries also need reliable water supplies. We have reached – and exceeded – the amount of water can be responsibly diverted from the Bay-Delta, groundwater and other surface water sources state-wide.
- Improving water supply reliability begins with a responsibility to use water reasonably, efficiently and to increase that efficiency over time.

- Although the state must plan for a water supply adequate supply to meet the needs of Californians and the state economy, the state itself does not have the obligation to provide all of those supplies. The state cannot and should not assume responsibility to provide all of the water demanded by all water users in all locations. The state has an important planning role, but water users bear a responsibility to take steps to plan responsibly and implement water supply programs.
- The state has a responsibility to work closely with disadvantaged communities to ensure that their water needs (quality and quantity) are met.
- Climate change is likely to reduce the amount of water available from existing surface and groundwater sources.
- Ongoing and historic contamination threatens ecosystem health, human health and the reliability of water supplies.
- Planning a more reliable water supply requires a focus on cost-effectiveness and a "beneficiary pays" approach to financing.
- Planning a more reliable water supply means planning for periods of shortages. It is not possible to provide supplies that are not subject to some uncertainty, for example, from prolonged or severe droughts.
- Different uses require different levels of reliability.
- There is no silver bullet to providing a reliable water supply. The winning approach will include a portfolio of investments, emphasizing tools such as efficiency, water recycling, improved groundwater management and Low Impact Development.