

Another View: Delta plan is a fair way to balance water supply

By Phil Isenberg
Special to The Bee

 Share

 Like

Published: Sunday, Oct. 16, 2011 - 12:00 am | Page 2E

Last Modified: Sunday, Oct. 16, 2011 - 11:23 am

Phil Isenberg, chairman of the Delta Stewardship Council, is responding to the Oct. 11 Viewpoints article "New Delta plan is not a responsible solution," which said the "Delta plan that is currently under development would make no clear environmental gains and would impose serious restrictions on water supplies in our communities."

California law requires that the Delta Stewardship Council adopt an enforceable Delta plan to achieve the state's co-equal goals: [water supply](#) reliability for California and a healthy and protected Delta ecosystem. The recent Viewpoint article by the mayors of Folsom and Roseville was encouraging in that local stakeholders are paying attention to the Delta plan, but it's also clear they should broaden their perspective.

The mayors state two main concerns about the Delta plan: It "would impose serious restrictions on water supplies in our communities" and

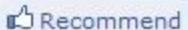
"proposes to impose fees on (our) water supplies to help pay for ... the Delta plan."

The Delta plan supports the required-by-law update of Delta water flows standards by 2014. Much has changed since the last update, including the adoption of co-equal goals as state water policy and advanced scientific understanding. "Serious restrictions" on local water supplies are an unlikely outcome and serve only to foster fear and opposition to a process that is necessary and important to the Delta ecosystem and predictable water supplies.

The draft Delta plan also says local water agencies should comply with existing state laws and use local supplies efficiently and responsibly. I hope the mayors support this approach. On [water conservation](#), for example, it's encouraging to hear the mayors support it, but the inconvenient truth is per capita water use in their cities – and in Sacramento – is far higher than the state average. Even after the state-mandated 20 percent urban conservation, their use will remain among the highest in California.

The draft Delta plan does recommend the Legislature impose fees. The plan follows the principle of beneficiary pays and suggests that fees also be charged to those who damage the Delta ecosystem. The twin notions of "beneficiaries pay" and "users pay" are fair and should be supported by everyone.

A last point: Those of us who live in Northern California like to complain about Delta water used by agriculture in the [Central Valley](#) and urban users in Southern California. I agree that exporters should pay a good share of the cost of improvements to the Delta ecosystem. But it is unreasonable for those of us up north to ignore the fact we use far more water than is exported through the Delta. Since we are part of the problem, we have to be part of the solution. It's that simple.

 Recommend  Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

© Copyright The Sacramento Bee. All rights reserved.

 Share

Phil Isenberg is chairman of the Delta Stewardship Council.