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Phil Isenberg, Chair
Delta Stewardship Council
980 Ninth Street, Ste 1500
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RE: Big Affordable Ideas

Dear Phil:

I have followed the proceedings of the Delta Stewardship Council over its first year about as carefully as a member of the public and a concerned stakeholder could, making constructive suggestions at intervals. At first the DSC seemed full of promise: new "eyes" and a fresh approach. More recently it seems to have lost steam, falling into bureaucratic norms: broad assertions of jurisdiction (turf battle mentality) and loss of focus on strategic planning.

Without having played a meaningful role in the legislative process leading to the Delta Reform Act, it may be presumptive to assert that the legislature expected more-- an affordable action plan to lead the way out of decades of false starts and inactivity to correct the State's water supply/water demand equation.

Instead, the Second Staff Draft of the Delta Plan fails to seize the initiative and retreats into a largely passive role of a super-planning commission under its "covered-action" regulatory role. Lost is the vision we thought would be coming based on the actions of the Blue Ribbon Delta Vision effort.

We need a strategic plan from the DSC, not another layer of permit granting/denying, carefully nestled with other jurisdictions with parallel authority.

To help you articulate a strategic plan which might actually be realized within the severe economic constraints of these troubled times, please consider the list of “Big Affordable Ideas” which follows:

Flood Control

- Turn over emergency response planning and levee protection implementation to a Delta-regional authority with immediately accessible emergency response funding and a funding base spanning the watershed which contributes the flood flows and the beneficiaries (including governmental) which rely on infrastructure subject to flooding in the Delta.
- Establish the floodplain of a design storm for the Central Valley as part of a flood management plan, anticipating reasonable levels of sea level rise and climate change, to provide the appropriate basis for flood easement acquisition and local land use planning regulation, as well as building and maintaining Delta levees at risk priority designs.
- Dredge major water conveyance channels in the Delta to enable conveyance capacity for both flood threats and water distribution, eliminating shoaling and scouring that have resulted from dredging restrictions and inactivity and providing economical materials for levee strengthening and maintenance. Combine consideration of isolating Old River flows from export pumping (as described in the Delta Corridors Plan) to improve further cross-Delta export operations while protecting the Old River ecosystem corridor.
- Overbuild critical levees in the western Delta and urbanized areas which has the dual effect of strengthening the most critical levees while providing emergency local stockpiling of materials critical to flood fighting without undue reliance upon handling and transportation assets which may be diverted to other critical tasks

during emergencies such as a large seismic event.

Governance

- Separate State Water Project management from the Department of Water Resources in an attempt to resolve the conflicts of interest that weaken both resources management and water project operational efficiency.
- Reconstitute the Department of Water Resources to concentrate on its resource planning and stewardship responsibilities and, especially, to “partner” with regional interests in planning, cost sharing and implementing integrated regional water management plans to optimize regional self-sufficiency. As Kamyar Guivetchi suggested to you in March at Clarksburg, empower regional water management to come up with a mix of strategies to meet its needs within a larger, statewide context.

Water Supply and Ecosystem Restoration

- Establish a “rule curve” hydrograph for Delta outflow based upon annual inflow consistent with safe yield concepts of ecosystem restoration needs. The immediate priority should be to begin to improve populations of Threatened and Endangered Species depending upon through flow and seasonal water quality necessary for both the ecosystem and local water supply needs which will lead to realizable export reliability projections.
- Cease (or reserve for emergencies) the operations of the Montezuma Slough Control Structure and re-open the dendritic sloughs and channels of the Suisun Marsh off of Suisun Bay to a more natural, seasonally fluctuating water supply. Re-establish Suisun Bay and Marsh as the principal mixing zone and nursery area it once provided for the Bay-Delta Estuary.

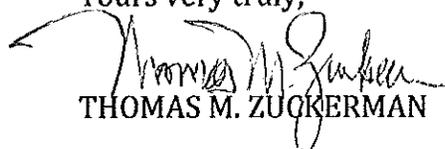
- Restore historical floodplains in the sedimentary deposition deltas of the Central Valley tributaries for run-off retention during wet periods and operate them in conjunction with upstream reservoirs and passive and active groundwater recharge projects to enhance flood management, ground water recharge and corridor ecosystem restoration.
- Explore the possibility of a West Delta Conveyance, operated in conjunction with flood water retention in flood by-passes, to optimize wet period water development without jeopardizing Delta safe yield limits for ecosystem and local water supply and quality needs.

I hope you find these suggestions useful and worth pursuing. My sense is that although real price tags can't be affixed, these types of initiatives would bring more and quicker relief and would cost far less than what the BDCP seems fixed on.

It is worth noting in passing that this week's MWQI RTDF Water Quality Report Summary Table (Monday, March 28, 2011) shows total Delta Outflow at 183,549 c.f.s., with export pumping less than 5,000 c.f.s., with a note that Banks pumping "halted on March 24 and 25 due to the immediate downstream system being at capacity," Jones pumping is zero, and San Luis Reservoir is filled to capacity.

I repeat my usual questions: what kind of a surplus water export system is this? How would an isolated Delta Conveyance facility make it any better?

Yours very truly,



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Cc: Joe Grindstaff