



June 30, 2008

Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Governor  
State of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

The Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force is providing this letter to fulfill its goal of commenting on a possible preferred water conveyance alternative by June 2008. We present these views against the backdrop of your February letter directing DWR to proceed with NEPA/CEQA analysis of at least four alternatives:

- ✓ The possibility of no new Delta conveyance facility;
- ✓ The possibility of a dual conveyance facility, as suggested by the Task Force;
- ✓ The possibility of an isolated facility;
- ✓ The possibility of substantial improvements and protections of the existing water export system, most often referred to as 'armoring the Delta' or a 'through-Delta' solution.

## Background

Executive Order S-17-06 directs the Blue Ribbon Task Force to include consideration of reliable water supply, the environment, and infrastructure in developing a vision and strategic plan. Of the 12 linked recommendations in the Vision we adopted in November 2007, Recommendation 1 states that the Delta ecosystem and a reliable water supply for California are the primary, co-equal goals for sustainable management of the Delta. Recommendation 8 states that new facilities for conveyance and storage, and better linkage between the two, are needed to better manage California's water resources to meet the dual objectives of reliable water supply and ecosystem health.

To achieve both of these linked objectives, the adopted vision made these additional recommendations: (1) Immediate improvements to the existing through-Delta export system; (2) an assessment of a dual conveyance system as the preferred direction, focused on understanding the optimal combination of through-Delta and isolated facility improvements; (3) to urgently assemble available information on design features, cost, and performance of alternative conveyance options against specified criteria to allow selection of a preferred alternative by June 2008.

In recent months, we have received a number of reports and presentations by Task Force work groups, and by CALFED, DWR, and others, described in Attachment A.

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**Conclusions and recommendations on a preferred water conveyance alternative.**

Through review and discussion of the information presented to us, we have grown more confident that dual conveyance, including both an improved, resilient through-Delta conveyance component and an isolated component, is a strong choice, provided the chosen design fully embraces the co-equal goals of a resilient ecosystem and reliable water supply. This is not just a choice of conveyance, or even of conveyance and storage, but also a choice with large implications for the future Delta ecosystem.

Analysis of conveyance facilities and associated storage must focus on more than the maximum amount of water that can be moved through the Delta. Beyond maximum flows, the analysis should determine the combination of facilities that can best achieve the management flexibility required to meet ecosystem needs, to provide greater reliability in water supply, to maximize the taking of water in wet periods when it is most available, and to accommodate the kinds of transfers and regional self-sufficiency needed. Management flexibility will be increasingly critical to capture water during wet periods and to cope with predicted increased volatility of weather and extreme weather events.

Much more analysis of sizing combinations, impacts, and costs of *both* an improved through-Delta component and an isolated component are needed to confirm any decision regarding dual conveyance and to finalize a design that contributes to our vision of co-equal goals for sustainable Delta management. In Attachment B, we recommend several elements for any conveyance facility investigation.

As your Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force moves toward our final goal of developing a Strategic Plan to implement our Vision for the Delta and the water future of California, we again reemphasize that improvements to the existing through-Delta conveyance system must begin immediately. It is equally critical that improvements to the ecosystem must begin now to ensure progress as rapidly as possible. The recommended approach requires both analysis and action; as dual-conveyance is studied in greater detail, interim steps must be taken to improve the through-Delta conveyance system today.

Consistent with our Vision's first recommendation, our Strategic Plan will provide a framework within which a more resilient ecosystem and reliable water conveyance system can be effectively implemented and operated and may make additional recommendations regarding conveyance facilities and associated storage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Phillip L. Isenberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Phillip L. Isenberg, Chair  
Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force

cc: (See attached list.)

Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger  
June 30, 2008

List of Courtesy Copies

Honorable Mike Chrisman  
Secretary for Resources  
Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Room 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. Lester Snow, Director  
Department of Water Resources  
1416 Ninth Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Attachment A: Information provided since adoption of *Our Vision for the California Delta*

- The Task Force's Water Supply and Reliability and Healthy Ecosystem Work Groups have suggested that a wet-year diversion system (a shift of export diversion timing to wetter periods, when least harmful to the ecosystem) be considered as a strategy to achieve greater water supply reliability and ecosystem health. To do so would require increased storage and conveyance capacity statewide. A dual conveyance system would increase conveyance capacity and options, and could support a wet-year diversion system if properly managed.
- CALFED submitted a "Summary Review of Prior Delta Conveyance Reports", which reviewed the findings of over 100 reports that dealt with Delta water conveyance and potential effects on water quality and ecosystem health and resilience. The report identified data gaps, especially regarding ecosystem performance, in previous studies and conveyance designs that would be critical to address when assessing an improved conveyance system.
- DWR submitted "An Initial Assessment of Dual Delta Water Conveyance", which gave a preliminary assessment of a dual conveyance strategy as part of ongoing efforts related to the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan development process, including preliminary design features, cost, and preliminary performance results of alternative conveyance options. The Task Force found that the assessment explained the merits of an isolated component, but fell short of addressing the long-term resilience and recoverability of the through-Delta component of the dual conveyance strategy.

Attachment B: Recommended elements for assessing conveyance facilities and related storage

1. **Directly address alternative choices and design configurations by how well they serve the co-equal goals of protecting the Delta ecosystem and providing water for Californians.** Include a clear description of near-term actions to improve ecosystem function and water system reliability of the existing through-Delta conveyance system.
2. **Incorporate ecosystem health and resilience.** Analyze a full range of through-Delta flows *and* isolated facility flows on in-Delta ecological processes and functions, and analyze how reduced pumping operations may reduce entrainment of certain fish species. The analyses should ensure that restoring ecological functions is a central component of the plan, and not treated merely as mitigation to offset continued water export functions – an approach which has failed to break through the political deadlock on water and the ecosystem for the past 40 years.
3. **Incorporate anticipated levels of usage of available ground and surface storage.** Include not only existing ground and surface water storage but also possible increases in ground and surface water storage. Incorporate timelines by which additional surface and ground water storage may become available for use into analyses. In addition, assess possible gains from changed operations of storage capacity (e.g., more effective flood plain protection and management allows effective increases in reservoir capacity).
4. **Face up to the question of anticipated future water diversion and exports from the Delta.** In order to make an intelligent decision on alternative water export facilities it is essential to state the expectations on water diversions and describe the decision processes and rules that would be used to determine allowable diversions under a range of hydrologic and climatic conditions. A greater emphasis on wet period diversion will require a more comprehensive set of regulatory requirements for the Delta and upstream tributaries than exists today, in order to ensure the achievement of our co-equal goals. We understand the political difficulty of this discussion. However, failure to face up to the question will once again lead to a divisive and bitter statewide battle about water and the Delta. Analyze the performance of all conveyance systems considered in terms of wet period diversion; that is, the ability to *divert, move and store* more water during wetter periods and reduce water diversions in drier periods in part to provide for Delta environmental protection and as a strategy to cope with reduced snowpack as a result of climate change. Quantify thresholds for water required in the Delta (in volume, timing, and quality at various locations) for effective functioning of the estuarine ecosystem under different conditions.
5. **Analyze implications for migratory fish species and upstream rivers.** Analyze the implications of conveyance and operational options, including a full range of diversion levels, on representative migratory fish species and upstream riverine habitat.
6. **Incorporate realistic estimates of reliable water transfers as part of the evaluation.** Reliable water transfers are a valued public policy goal and specific estimates of such transfers should be included in designing and assessing alternative conveyance systems.

7. **Identify and evaluate improvements to through-Delta conveyance for resiliency and recoverability in the event of catastrophic loss and incorporate effective improvements in analyses.** Do not merely assume the status quo of existing through-Delta conveyance is acceptable; improvements to the existing through-Delta system must occur to protect California's water and the ecosystem regardless of dual conveyance design details chosen. Near-term improvements on through-Delta conveyance could contribute to the two important goals of (1) increased conveyance capacity and (2) reducing risk of catastrophic failure, including the value of repairable through-Delta conveyance capacity. This is consistent with our Vision recommendations 7, 8, and 9.
8. **Incorporate a sea level rise projection of at least 55 inches (by 2100) in facility designs.** Additionally, clearly state and assess the possible implications of other dimensions of climate change, such as increased extreme storms, on any conveyance facility.
9. **All alternative facilities should be evaluated against a common level of seismic and flood durability.** This analysis should include not only effects on the facilities themselves as structures but the risks to other human uses of the Delta and the Delta ecosystem resulting from effects of earthquakes or floods on facilities.
10. **Incorporate water quality objectives in analyses.** Clearly evaluate the implications of alternative approaches to conveyance and to the proposed conservation program on water quality objectives for the Delta, and how these objectives will be affected by the various alternatives. These analyses should incorporate a full range of water quality issues, including salinity, temperature, dissolved oxygen, pesticides and toxics and turbidity.
11. **Ensure transparency and accountability in decisions.** Specify projected schedules for construction, the cost of the activities, and their funding sources. Include sufficient details to guarantee that ecosystem restoration and conservation measures will be fully and properly implemented. Devise assurances that the actions will be implemented, including, for example, directly incorporating actions into any and all state water contracts, and as conditions for receipt of bond funds, either for facility development or for ecosystem purposes. Concurrently, ensure that a system of adaptive management is implemented so that progress is monitored and decision makers can manage adaptively.
12. **Develop a baseline that reflects current conditions.** Analyses of alternative conveyance facilities and operations should be compared against a common baseline that reflects current operations and legal requirements.