



**CONTRA COSTA  
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August 31, 2007

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The Honorable Phil Isenberg, Chair  
and Members, Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
State of California Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth St., Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: Fluctuating salinity hypothesis**

Dear Chair Isenberg and Members of the Task Force:

I am writing to urge the Blue Ribbon Task Force to rely upon the best available science as you formulate your Delta Vision. The presentation on the Bay Delta Conservation Plan that you heard at the August 30<sup>th</sup> Blue Ribbon Task Force meeting included statements that some alternatives would allow greater fluctuations in Delta salinity as if there is a scientific basis to believe that this is desirable. In fact, current scientific knowledge shows that a fluctuating Delta could well be detrimental to fish. Please consider the following information on this point.

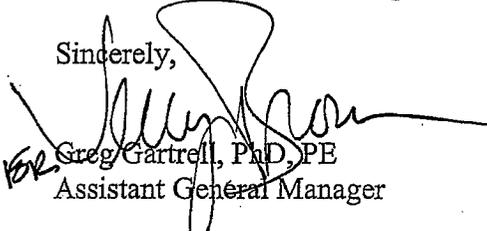
The June 11, 2007 CALFED Science Program Workshop on "Defining a Variable Delta to Promote Estuarine Fish Habitat" made it clear that a more saline and fluctuating Delta would be fraught with problems. The workshop discredited the notion that fluctuating salinity is necessarily beneficial and established clear problems with the hypothesis. For example, a more saline and fluctuating Delta would exacerbate the devastating effects of the overbite clam, and the hypothesis that it would be beneficial to fish runs counter to the considerable body of evidence that links fresher conditions to improved fish populations. The workshop demonstrated that fluctuating salinity in the Delta could well be counterproductive.

At the June 11 workshop, proponents of the benefits of a fluctuating Delta could not say what salinity range is possible or desirable. Since then, one prominent early proponent has apparently changed his mind – he petitioned the US Fish and Wildlife Service and presented court testimony in the OCAP case calling for the exact opposite: a fresher delta in spring and fall than currently exists to protect and enhance delta smelt populations. That testimony relied upon published work and the most recent data.

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
Fluctuating salinity hypothesis  
August 31, 2007  
Page 2

Studies have shown that fish populations generally decline as salinity increases. If a "more natural" salinity regime is desired, the Delta will require more - not less - fresh water. That is not something that an isolated facility can provide.

Sincerely,



Greg Gartrell, Ph.D., PE  
Assistant General Manager

GG/LSO:wec

copies to: Karen Scarborough  
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