

LA AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
DELTA VISION CABINET COMMITTEE
HEARING ON BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE STRATEGIC PLAN
Statement of Gary Toebben, President and CEO
Friday, November 21, 2008

The LA Area Chamber of Commerce is largest business organization in Los Angeles County. Our 1600 members know that a reliable flow of water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is essential to our quality of life and our contribution to the California economy. It is our hope that a Delta Plan will provide timely direction on much overdue state action to prevent the ecological collapse of the Delta and restore the long term reliability of the State Water Project.

As a business organization we do not profess to know the intricate detail of this complex environmental and engineering issue. We do, however, fully understand the implication of the threat presented to our economy and the public's welfare by the current use and misuse of the Delta's resources. It is very apparent to us that bold action is needed to correct the situation in the face of longstanding competing interests. We commend the Governor and the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force for their leadership, and we urge the Delta Vision Cabinet Committee to present a definitive plan that is equal to the challenges before us.

In the briefest terms possible, we implore the Cabinet Committee to build upon your many combined years in government and business to recommend practical priority actions that can be paid for from reasonably available sources. Moving ahead to recommend actions that can be taken now should not be delayed while complex and contingent new funding and governance strategies are pursued in the name of political compromise or in pursuit of the "perfect" solution.

It should go without saying that recommended actions should be based on the best available science and policy. When your plan is tested by political pressures, we encourage you to remind detractors that the status quo is not working, nor is it in the best interests of the state. Our future economic viability is at stake.

We ask that every recommended action be accompanied by accountability for implementation. Creation of a new agency or passage of a water bond may provide needed tools to achieve long term goals, but these actions do not equate to tangible solutions that we can measure in terms of environmental improvements and improved water supply. Independent audits and the transfer of authority for failed or unreasonably delayed actions are common in business. Innovative and real methods to promote accountability are needed.

Finally, we have taken the time to visit the Delta and to sponsor educational seminars for our members. We have also engaged in many discussions with business organizations throughout the state about the Delta. We can all clearly see that the levees and below sea level "islands" cannot possibly stand up against the natural forces of gravity, flood, sea level rise, and earthquake.

Whatever physical measures can be taken to protect the State Water Project and other water supplies that are dependent on Delta diversions must be taken to move this critical water supply infrastructure out of harms way. Current farming and wastewater discharges that are exacerbating the threats to native species and habitat should be regulated and controlled as closely as the export pumps of the State Water Project and the Central Valley Project. Immediate steps should also be taken to regulate the carbon emissions from Delta farming as part of the AB 32 process.

Sometimes the complexity of existing practices makes it difficult to see simple truths. In this case, the unalterable truth is that natural forces will eventually prevail. We recommend that the State use its existing authority and available financial resources, under the close supervision of the Governor, to take all steps necessary to protect and restore the Delta's native environmental resources, the affected State Water Project and other vulnerable water supply systems.

A long term plan with significant additional funding should also be established and diligently pursued. We are confident that business organizations through out the state will see the merit in a long term plan and the need to actively support the allocation of resources.

Thank you for your leadership in improving our environment and in providing a sustainable water supply for the future citizens of our state.