

we (John Kerlin)

October 20, 2008

DELTA VISION COMMITTEE



Mr. Mike Chrisman, Chair
Secretary, Resources Agency
1416 9th St. Suite 1311
Sacramento, Ca 95814

Linda Adams, Secretary
Environmental Protection Agency
P.O. Box 2815
Sacramento, Ca 95812

Dale Bonner, Secretary
Business, Transportation and Housing Agency
980 9th Street, Suite 2450
Sacramento, CA 95814

Michael Peevey, President
California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

A.G. Kawamura, Secretary
Department of Food and Agriculture
1220 N Street
Sacramento, Ca 95814

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Archer Norris

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Diablo Valley College

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Shell Oil Products U.S.

President and CEO
Linda Best

SUBJECT: DELTA VISION STRATEGIC PLAN

Dear Committee Members,

The Contra Costa Council (Council) is a non-profit public policy advocacy organization located in Contra Costa County. Our membership is comprised of almost 400 members representing business, education, healthcare, heavy industry, housing, labor, local-government, manufacturing, and non-profit organizations. These members represent a composite of all segments of the "business community" in our county. They also reflect the interests of the East Bay region. Our mission is to enhance economic vitality and quality of life in our region. The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is a defining physical, economic and cultural landscape for the people who live and work in Contra Costa County. The Delta crisis has a direct impact on our communities and we are very concerned about future policy decisions regarding the Delta.

The Council has been engaged with the Delta Vision process from the beginning. We convened a special task force of our membership and prepared a consensus set of guiding principles. Those Principles are enclosed and were transmitted to the Blue Ribbon Task Force in mid 2007. We have participated in Blue Ribbon Task Force meetings and were invited on several occasions to present our viewpoint. Now that the Blue Ribbon Task Force has completed its work and submitted their Strategic Plan to you and the Governor, we offer the following comments.

We commend the Task Force members and staff for undertaking a very complex and tedious task in a transparent and professional manner that allowed all interests to present often-conflicting information and views. They were able to compile that information and develop a comprehensive and readable set of documents, first a Delta Vision and now a Strategic Plan. And they were able to do so within the timeline established by the Governor. Their effort is now before you to be reviewed and subsequently transmitted to the Governor and state legislature.

We have read the Vision and Strategic Plan and we are very satisfied with the content that addressed all of our principles for economic vitality and quality of life. We are supportive



of all of the Strategic Plan goals. The Plan addresses all of the complex interactions within the Delta region and should be viewed in that context and the Plan must be viewed in its entirety and not be cherry-picked for political expediency.

We are very supportive of all seven goals, starting with the co-equal status of the quality of the ecosystem and a reliable water supply delivery system, closely followed by recognizing the Delta region as a critical place for agricultural, recreational, history, culture and life style activities. The proposed seven goals establish a benchmark to preserve the environment and unique features of the Delta, while also providing for a reliable water delivery system for other regions of the state.

We are also supportive of all of the Strategic Plan actions. We recognize that many stakeholders will be concerned and suspicious about the "devil in the details". Their individual interests will be subject to question and change. But the Delta is in crisis and change is widely acknowledged and must be accomplished. Managing change and expectations of change is always difficult, but the current condition of the Delta demands that change is critical for the sake of the estuarine environment, region and state.

The 7th goal calls for a fundamental change in the governance structure regarding the Delta so that a single state legal entity is truly responsible and accountable for all future governmental activities regarding the condition of the Delta. Of course, federal agencies are also directly responsible for conditions in the Delta. Cooperation with those agencies will be essential and the federal government must also be part of the solution. The recommendation to establish a California Delta Ecosystem and Water Council that will oversee the multitude of activities and operations in the Delta is absolutely needed. The recommendation will need legislative action to accomplish. We concur with the recommendation and urge that the current administration prepare necessary legislative proposals for introduction into the 2009 legislative agenda. Without action on the governance issues, the Strategic Plan becomes fragmented and the condition of the Delta will likely continue to deteriorate. The status quo is failing and state government must take actions to reverse a critical downward direction.

We appreciate all of the efforts taken over the past 2 years to develop a comprehensive Delta Vision and Strategic Plan. Now is the time to take the steps necessary to bring that Vision into reality. It will require one step at a time, but please take the next step and endorse the conclusions and recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Task Force and begin developing necessary legislative and administrative actions to bring about change for an improved Delta.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Best".

Linda Best
President



Encl: Guiding Principles
cc. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
Senator Tom Torlakson
Assemblyman Mark DeSaulnier
Assemblyman Guy Houston
Senator Diane Feinstein
Senator Barbara Boxer
Representative George Miller
Representative Ellen Tauscher
Representative Doris Matsui
Representative Jerry McNerney
Representative Mike Thompson
Members of Blue Ribbon Task Force



**CONTRA COSTA COUNCIL
DELTA VISION
STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is in crisis. The Delta's levee system is fragile and vulnerable to failure from earthquake, floods and other causes. Continued sinking of Delta islands, as well as sea level rise and increased severity of flooding as a result of global warming, pose longer term threats. The decline of fisheries and endangered species indicate the declining health of the estuary. All of these factors threaten the access of millions of Californians to a reliable supply of high quality water.

The Contra Costa Council believes that any solution developed through the state's Delta Vision process must take a comprehensive view of the Delta and consider its numerous assets, as outlined below. Accordingly, the following principles, taken collectively, will guide the Council's advocacy efforts on any proposed actions regarding the Delta.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta is of vital importance to northern California and the state as a whole in many ways:

- It influences the physical, social, economic and cultural fabric of the Delta region, including Contra Costa, Alameda, Solano, Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Yolo counties.
- It defines our shoreline and serves numerous municipal and industrial intakes.
- It is an essential resource for the State of California. It is home to more than 500,000 people, provides habitat to 700 native species, and contains multiple strategic highways, pipelines, utility distribution systems, railroads and deep-water ports serving state and national interests.
- It delivers water to the homes of more than 25 million Californians, agriculture and businesses and supports a significant recreation industry and fisheries.
- Its water supply and other Delta services support \$400 billion in economic activity.

Solutions/Actions must meet the following criteria:

Protect public health and safety (death, illness or injury), including the public's supply of quality drinking water, against levee failures through:

- A coordinated emergency response program
- Flood management
- Flood routing
- Protective land-use policies
- A program to retrofit and strengthen strategic elements of the existing levee system

Provide a reliable supply of high quality water for California:

- Ensure that the water supply is safe, clean and of high quality to meet the needs of California's residents, farms, commerce and recreation
- Provide improvements to fisheries
- Ensure the quality of the drinking water derived from the Delta and used as part of the drinking water supply
- Ensure that water supplies derived from the Delta, including water supplies used or conveyed through the Delta, are reliable by making investments in the Delta that reduce the conflict between fish and water project operations such as fish screens at export facilities and modification to Delta channels that reduce fish densities near water diversion facilities
- Ensure that water supplies derived from the Delta are minimally affected by catastrophic levee failures through a coordinated emergency response program:
 - Invest in critical western and central Delta levees necessary to protect beneficial uses and resources of the Delta
 - Ensure Propositions 84 and 1E bond funding goes to improving Delta levees, focusing on critical levees that protect water quality and other Delta levees that protect public health and safety
 - Strategic stockpiling of emergency repair materials
 - Develop infrastructure, such as surface and groundwater storage that increases the ability to manage the Delta with greater flexibility
- Encourage water use efficiency by **all** users of Delta water through conservation and recycling and other cost-effective means to reduce reliance on the Delta

Protect infrastructure in the Delta

- Protect critical infrastructure in the Delta, including highways, pipelines, utility distribution systems, railroads and deep water ports that serve the interests of the state by taking actions to avoid catastrophic levee failure
- Coordinate strategic infrastructure improvements with other actions, such as levee repair, to provide cost-effective use of public funds for Delta protection

Protect economic assets of the Delta:

- Protect the local, regional and state economic vitality by taking steps outlined above to avoid catastrophic failure of Delta levees

- Recognize the importance of direct and indirect economic impacts of catastrophic Delta levee failures, including increased costs of materials and services associated with levee repairs and emergency response
- Protect and enhance recreation and tourism opportunities, including boating, hunting and fishing that enhance our quality of life

Protect the environmental health of the estuary:

- Improve and enhance aquatic and terrestrial habitats and improve ecological functions in the Bay Delta watersheds to support sustainable native populations of plant, aquatic and terrestrial species
- Actions and remedies must be based on sound science

Develop a regulatory framework that will protect ecosystem health, water quality and reliability

- Identify an independent governmental body with the legal authority and accountability to regulate and assure applicable water quality and environmental standards are met in the Delta. Other stakeholders, including appropriate state and federal agencies, must be participants and held accountable for implementing needed actions.
- Develop a regulatory framework and needed infrastructure, such as storage, to provide for seasonal fresh water flows through the Delta into San Francisco Bay that will protect ecosystem health and water quality and improve the ability to manage the Delta with greater flexibility.
- Base actions on sound scientific principles
- Develop an equitable cost-sharing formula to fund needed projects and actions
- Implement critical initial projects immediately with available funding, while longer-term actions are being considered.