

Delta Vision Strategic Plan

THE SACRAMENTO-SAN JOAQUIN DELTA is a great natural treasure, a vital link in the state's water system, and home to more than 500,000 people. It spans five counties in northern California at the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers. As a result of changing environmental conditions and the state's increasing population and demand for water, the Delta as it is managed today is no longer sustainable.

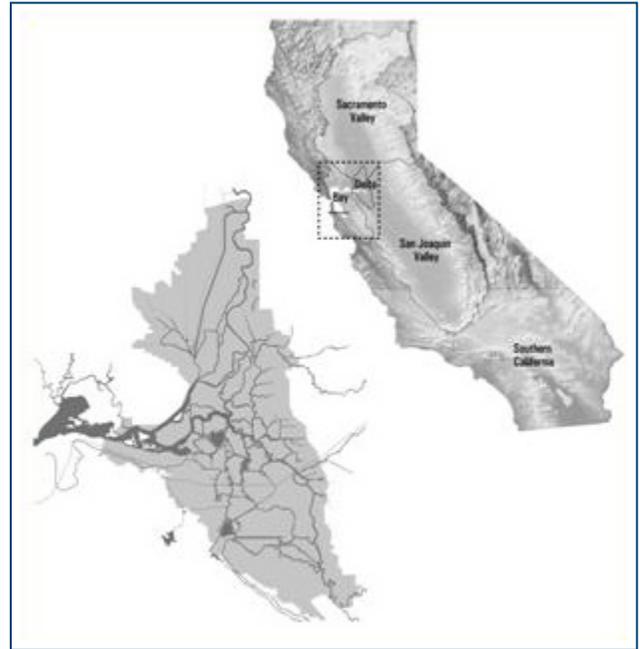
A vision for the future of this crucial estuary was released in December 2007 by the Governor's Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force. The Task Force described a future in which the California Delta could continue to thrive over the coming generations despite the major challenges it will face, challenges of seismicity, sea level rise, regional climate change, subsidence, population growth and invasive species. These six "drivers of change" affecting the Delta have converged to place the Delta at great risk of physical collapse.

A Strategic Solution

In its Vision, the Task Force makes 12 integrated and linked recommendations. Of these, the Task Force identifies two of these recommendations as the most central to the Delta's future:

PUBLIC COMMENT

Comments to improve the fourth draft of the Delta Vision Strategic Plan must be made by September 2. However, comments for consideration of subsequent drafts and the final draft may be made anytime prior to September 30. Comments may be submitted to: dv_context@calwater.ca.gov.



The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta a vital link in the state's water system and is no longer sustainable as it is managed today. The Governor's Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force has been charged with developing a plan for the Delta's long-term viability.

- The Delta ecosystem and a reliable water supply for California are the primary, co-equal goals for sustainable management of the Delta. Both are irreplaceable assets and one must not be secured at the expense of the other.
- The California Delta is a unique and valued area, warranting recognition and special legal status from the state of California. The Delta's uniqueness and value must be protected through special designation to safeguard its assets, its culture and its economy.

The draft Delta Vision Strategic Plan outlines the broad strategic directions that local, state and federal governments and the people of California should pursue to make the vision a reality. The Strategic Plan makes recommendations in four major areas: Governance and Finance, Ecosystem, Water Supply Reliability and the Delta as Place:

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Delta Vision Strategic Plan (cont.)

- **Governance and Finance:** Create a new governance and financing structure, including user fees and other financial tools, and use all existing means to improve compliance of diversions and water use with state law.
- **Ecosystem:** Restore extensive interconnected habitats; restore Delta flows and channels to reflect more natural climate patterns and estuarine conditions; and reduce or eliminate stressors to the Delta ecosystem. Create an adaptive science framework to support ecosystem restoration.
- **Water Supply and Reliability:** Significantly improve water-use efficiency and optimize regional water self-sufficiency throughout California; improve water conveyance and related storage facilities; improve water quality for drinking, irrigation, and the ecosystem.
- **Delta as Place:** Increase recognition of the Delta as a place and enhance tourism and recreation by creating a National Heritage Area and a State Recreation area; facilitate new investments in “gateway” locations near major Delta cities and highways; achieve emergency protection consistent with state and federal policies and discourage inappropriate urbanization of the Delta and its adjoining floodplain.

Key Themes

The draft Strategic Plan also characterizes four key themes taken directly from priorities expressed in their December 2007 report, *Our Vision for the California Delta*:

- **Revitalization, not mitigation:** Adopt a strategy that better supports diverse species, is less susceptible to major disruptions and increases opportunities for adaptation to changing circumstances.
- **Sustainability, not extraction:** Focus on sustainability rather than extraction or withdrawal of water; a sustainable water supply is more valuable and reliable, and will require significantly improved water use efficiency.
- **Recognition, not abandonment:** Encourage the Delta’s unique character with levee improvements, support for its economic engines of agriculture and tourism, and safety improvements.
- **Consistency, not chaos:** Strengthen Delta governance to emphasize consistency of actions among existing local, state and federal agencies, guided by a clear and enforceable plan, thus enabling all four themes.

HISTORY OF DELTA VISION

Delta Vision was established by Executive Order of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on September 17, 2006. The order created the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force and charged it with developing a durable vision for sustainable management of the Delta so that it could be managed over the long-term to restore and maintain identified functions and values of importance to the environmental quality of the Delta and the economic and social well-being of all Californians.

The order directed the Task Force to develop its vision by the end of 2007, which it did with the publication of *Our Vision for the California Delta*. The order further directed the Task Force to develop a strategic plan to implement its vision by October of 2008, the process which is currently in progress.

Chaired by Phil Isenberg, other Task Force members are Monica Florian, Richard M. Frank, Thomas McKernan, Sunne Wright McPeak, William K. Reilly and Raymond Seed.