

Delta Vision Stakeholder Coordination Group

Visioning Process and Draft Products



Presentation to the
Blue Ribbon Task Force
August 30, 2007

SCG Guiding Principles

- Given the inherent values of the Delta, its cultural uniqueness, and the economic and social networks it supports, visions for the future of the Delta should incorporate a sustainable Delta landform, including the levee system (i.e. the Delta should not be abandoned)
- The role of agriculture, fisheries, wildlife, recreation and tourism as major contributors to the economic vitality and quality of life of Delta communities, should be integrated into visions for the Delta
- The Delta and its ecosystem are regional, state and national treasures which should be protected and enhanced through any vision developed
- A role of the Delta in providing a reliable water supply to the San Joaquin Valley, Southern California, the Bay Area and the Delta region itself should be supported by visions
- Efforts to maintain, restore, and build terrestrial and aquatic habitat necessary to support desired population levels of native and desirable non-native species, including migratory species, should be supported by visions

SCG Guiding Principles

(continued)

- A commitment to avoiding disproportionate impacts and providing equitable benefits for low-income communities and communities of color should be incorporated into any vision for the Delta
- Given the many uncertainties associated with the complexity of the Delta ecosystem, pilot projects, long-term monitoring and an adaptive approach to implementation should be an integral part of any long-term vision for the Delta, building on the principle of “reversibility” in the early stages of assessing options
- Out-of-Delta actions to improve land and water management must be considered, and will likely be required, as part of the long-term vision for sustainability of the Delta and the Delta ecosystem
- Failure to act now, given the condition of and future risks to the Delta, is not an option.

SCG Recommendation for Water Conveyance Decision Making

1. If no fatal flaws are identified, obtain permits and ground-test the components of a Middle River Conveyance option, initially as a reversible experiment.
 - Assess implementation of: fish screens, gates and other “testable” components.
 - Develop performance standards that will be applicable to any conveyance option, including: ecosystem, water supply, environmental justice, water quality, fish populations.
 - Evaluate impacts of a siphon to separate Old and Middle Rivers, under varying water operations and flows.
 - Conduct real-time monitoring, testing the components under varying flow conditions. At the end of each year, assess whether it should be continued as an experiment and maintain the ability to modify the design.

SCG Recommendation for Water Conveyance Decision Making

2. Simultaneously, in parallel with the through-Delta Middle River Conveyance options, begin detailed analyses of the isolated conveyance portion of a potential dual conveyance system, and related issues,

including but not limited to:

- impacts on in-Delta water supply and quality;
- impact on flood threats;
- security of an isolated facilities to earthquake, terrorism, flooding and sea level rise;
- cost and fiscal impact on Delta levee maintenance and rehab, and flood response;
- security of Delta infrastructure and agricultural production;
- impact upon aquatic and terrestrial organisms;
- routing and,
- costs and financing.

SCG Recommendation for Water Conveyance Decision Making

3. Future decisions about conveyance should be based on the results of these parallel analyses and other emerging information.

Out of Delta Strategies and Operations

1. Identify the desired characteristics (species, habitat, etc.) of a sustainable Delta ecosystem, and the changes in water inflows, outflows and in-Delta circulation needed to support that ecosystem (consistent with other beneficial uses).
2. Identify changes to the water management system most effective for providing environmental assets and reducing adverse impacts.
3. Identify available upstream flood management strategies that reduce flood impacts on the Delta and create other potential benefits (e.g. water supply during dry periods, habitat), and evaluate the potential benefits and costs of those strategies.

Out of Delta Strategies and Operations

(continued)

4. Identify appropriate in-Delta salinity regimes to protect urban, agricultural and ecosystem values under varying flow conditions and configurations.
5. Evaluate the extent to which existing state institutions effectively and transparently manage decision-making and implementation associated with large-scale hydrologic regime changes potentially needed to support desired biological conditions. Pending the results of this evaluation, identify and explore approaches to improving decision-making capacity and transparency.
6. Identify aspects of the current administrative, regulatory, legal, and institutional system that constrain opportunities to more effectively manage the system for ecosystem benefits, and achieve desired water quality and supply goals.

SCG Recommendations on Environmental Justice

The following issues and questions, while not exhaustive, should be evaluated for any Vision:

1. Public health impacts resulting from mercury or other water contaminants in Delta waters
2. Impacts on drinking water quality, both surface and groundwater supplies
3. Impacts on potable drinking water availability due to any proposed changes in surface or groundwater rights or changes in current patterns of use, and the potential for communities currently lacking potable water to benefit from changes in Delta policies
4. Targeted assessments of risk to low-income communities and communities of color from catastrophic events and of the potential for these communities to benefit from emergency response planning

SCG Recommendations on Environmental Justice

(continued)

5. Effect on employment opportunities or other community resources or the potential to improve economic conditions including job creation, resulting from any policy changes of Delta Vision.
6. Any changes in the cost of domestic water and the impacts on affordability for low-income communities and communities of color
7. Ecosystem changes that may impact access to cultural resources, especially salmon and other river-related resources critical to maintaining particular Native American cultures.
8. The impacts on land-use, affordable housing and quality of life due to the proposed SCG visions.

“Flexible Delta”

- Middle River conveyance if shown to improve water supply reliability, water quality and ecosystem conditions
- Old River isolated from pumping effects and managed for habitat
- Water storage islands in the Delta
- Widespread creation of tidal marsh, flood bypasses, floodplains, and other key habitats
- Seismically secure levees to protect legacy towns, cities, and critical infrastructure
- Seismically secure levees to protect west Delta

“Resilient Adaptive Delta”

- Middle River and isolated facility conveyance if shown to improve water supply reliability, water quality and ecosystem conditions
- Old River isolated from pumping effects and managed for habitat
- Widespread creation of tidal marsh, flood bypasses, floodplains, and other key habitats
- Seismic risk reduction program for west Delta, including subsidence reversal, cross-levees
- Re-evaluation of primary and secondary zone restrictions to support sustainable landscape

Similarities Among Potential

SCG Visions

- Action-based decision making using adaptive management
- Conveyance through Mokelumne, Middle River and Victoria Canal if shown to improve water supply reliability, water quality and ecosystem conditions
- Old River isolated from pumping effects and managed for habitat
- Upstream infiltration of floodwaters into groundwater aquifers to the extent feasible
- Tidal marsh creation in several areas, including Cache Slough and Suisun Marsh

Similarities Among Potential

SCG Visions

(continued)

- Floodplain restoration on the Mokelumne, Cosumnes, and San Joaquin
- New flood bypasses along Paradise Cut and in the Stone Lakes area, and management of the Yolo Bypass for aquatic habitat as well as flood attenuation
- Terrestrial habitat obtained from willing sellers throughout the Delta
- Increased seismic and flood security for west Delta islands, legacy towns, and critical infrastructure

Differences Among Potential SCG Visions

- No isolated conveyance facility in the Flexible Delta vision
- Linking of Delta water exports to hydrologic and water quality conditions in the Flexible Delta vision
- Transitioning of west Delta islands away from irrigated agriculture in the Flexible Delta vision
- Use of water storage islands in the Flexible Delta vision
- Re-circulation of water into the San Joaquin River for in-Delta water quality
- More specificity about which levees to upgrade