

Comments of Daniel E. Griset

Board Member of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, representing the City of Santa Ana

Good morning, I am Dan Griset and I represent the City of Santa Ana on the Board of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. I have previously served as Mayor and Councilmember in Santa Ana, as well as President and Director of the Orange County Water District. This morning I bring some local government and special district perspective to the Delta Vision process and to our water problems, in general.

As the Task Force is well aware, southern California needs a reliable and high quality water supply from the State Water Project. This water is invaluable to us in our efforts to maximize our local resources by maximizing groundwater conjunctive use and in recycling more of our wastewater. It is Metropolitan's objective to stabilize---not increase---our water supplies from the Delta. This is why we have a core commitment to ever increasing investments in water conservation throughout our region.

The Task Force is helping us by setting a Delta policy framework and identifying specific actions necessary to achieve water supply reliability and to protect the Delta ecosystem. Your draft Strategic Plan is a genuine effort to achieve a balance between these environment priorities and the need for protecting the sinews of California's economy. Success in striking this balance, along with a greater understanding of the realities of the Delta, can better substantiate the plans and actions and results we seek. As we move forward we would like to see performance measures used to guide the future actions required for continuing improvements in this very complex watershed.

This draft Plan recognizes the key drivers of change that are contributing to the serious impairments of the Delta's ecosystem and other vital Delta services. We support the Task Force in its call for bold action to counter these growing dangers.

With this in mind, we support the Plan's call for dual conveyance and additional groundwater and surface storage as appropriate ways to improve water supply reliability and to resolve troubling ecosystem conflicts.

Resolving these conflicts in concert with improving supply reliability are essential linkages in the draft Plan. An example of this is the plan's approach to habitat restoration where the two goals of ecosystem restoration and water supply reliability are linked. Minimizing threats to native species and encouraging those natural Delta systems that support their survival is fundamental in all of this.

I want to speak to one concern, however, in the governance section of the draft Plan. This is a concern about the amount of responsibility and authority proposed for the California Delta Ecosystem and Water Council. In our view a proposal to give the Council more than oversight responsibilities may be premature and possibly unnecessary. Of great concern to us is the potential this proposal may have in creating needless delays in getting started on a long process of planning and implementing solutions. We think the executive and legislative leadership that is essential in any event to any success in the Delta can marshal existing authorities and charge the Council with rigorous oversight of program planning and outcomes.

If further changes in governance are needed because of a standstill in Plan implementation, then we would support the creation of new authorities for this Council. In the event that the important actions called for in the eventually adopted Plan are blocked by narrow interests, we would have a situation where new responsibilities for the Council would be justified.

We do support the call for a Delta Conservancy to pursue ecosystem restoration. We also support the merger of the State and Federal water projects, a change that would allow the Department of Water Resources to deliver real planning services for our water resources on a truly statewide basis. We also support the Plan's recognition of the need for additional resources for science and water rights administration.

Thank you for this opportunity to present these views on the much needed work you are doing.