The Board of Supervisors

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Contra Costa County

John Cullen
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and
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(925) 335-1900

The Honorable Phil Isenberg and Members,
Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

September 18, 2007

Dear Chairman Isenberg and Members of the Task Force:

Today the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors approved the following parameters to guide a vision and components of a vision that, as a county, we consider to be vitally important. We thank you for your work on this most important topic, and offer the following for your consideration:

- Through-delta conveyance actions did not progress in the CALFED process; through-delta conveyance actions need to be implemented, monitored and managed prior to consideration of other conveyance actions.

- A "level playing field" is encouraged, in that some users should not unduly benefit at the expense of others; all parties will have to compromise if we are to save the delta ecosystem and its species.

- The delta is part of a larger ecosystem that includes San Francisco Bay and environs. Changes to and in the Delta will affect this ecosystem. Studies, analysis and modeling of the Delta need to be ecosystem based, and should include the watershed to the extent practicable. Needs of the ecosystem need to be determined prior to revision of export scenarios.

- Improvement of the delta environment and protection of water quality from additional pollutant levels in the delta ecosystem and delta outflows should be included in any vision for the delta.

- The 8 western delta islands are paramount to protection of the delta ecosystem, and to the state's existing water supply now and under any future delta supply scenario. It is critical that rehabilitation of these levees commence immediately.

- Climate change is one of the most significant threats to the delta and the ecosystem. Any solutions proposed for the delta need to address climate change.

- We support out-of-delta (statewide) solutions to the delta's problems where possible. Water exported from the delta serves most of the state, providing domestic and agricultural water supply. The watersheds draining to the delta region cover much of

California. Many of the delta's problems can be managed in the service area or the upstream watersheds, before problems become acute within the delta itself. For example;

- Conjunctive use (groundwater storage for use in dry times in the San Joaquin Valley and elsewhere)
- Flood plain management in the watershed (to reduce flood extremes within the delta)
- Consideration of other water supply options such as desalination and reuse where practicable
- Optimizing use of floodwater for water supply purposes.

- Middle River conveyance, while promising, raises many questions, including definition of "variable" water quality; comments, concerns are as follows;
  - Agreement should be reached regarding the scientific dispute over what a variable delta really is (i.e. historic salinity levels possibly skewing study conclusions)
  - Potential impacts to the western delta habitat, fishery in terms of high salinity
  - Water supply (to cities, agricultural districts, groundwater users, industries located in Contra Costa County); what amount of freshwater flow can be expected, and when: can intakes in the western delta be accommodated (water rights)
  - Impacts, benefits to Old River, western delta with Middle River conveyance.

- We support measures to be implemented now, (consistent with the Contra Costa Water District's (CCWD) Staged Conveyance Actions), specifically including the following;
  - Emergency response; stockpiling rock throughout the delta, <u>including the western delta</u>, to protect water quality <u>and levees</u>
  - Water quality and fishery improvements at Franks Tract
  - Additional and improved fish screens at pumps
  - Habitat improvement projects at Dutch Slough, and Suisun Bay (and in general)
  - Multi-year funding commitment to restore levees (non-project levees and levees outside the state plan of flood control)
  - Immediate rehabilitation of levees for the 8 western delta islands and other islands in the central delta important for infrastructure.

- We support the Vision for the 21st Century, a Regional self-sufficiency scenario, put forward by Tom Zuckerman and the delta group which embodies most of the above-mentioned items as well as;
  - Considers out-of-delta solutions to reduce stress on the delta
  - Envisions less water out of the delta in dry years (when more is taken and the delta needs it the most)
  - Replenishes groundwater basins
  - Addresses the water supply-demand imbalance prior to conveyance issues
  - A flood management plan as a necessary tool early in process
  - Expanding central valley groundwater storage
  - Restore enough outflow to restore mixing zone to Suisun Bay
  - Restoration of levees throughout the delta.

- We support aspects of the August 21, 2007 Delta Vision Stakeholder Coordination Group's Report, as follows;
  - The Guiding Principles (pg 4)
  - Concepts of action-based decision making (pg 6)

- Upstream floodplain management (pg 9)
- Out-of-delta strategies (pg 9)
- Outcome topics (pg 31) as follows;
  - Preparing Emergency Plans for the Delta for life, property & infrastructure
  - Continuing to provide funding for levee maintenance and restoring tidal marsh
  - Identifying lands needed for flood protection
- Reuse of dredged materials for levee maintenance (pg 56 #11)

- We support the Contra Costa Council's Delta Vision and Principles document with the following comments;
  - Climate change needs to be addressed
  - The County has not taken a position on surface storage at this time
  - An understanding of the impact of delta flows on habitat and the health of the estuary needs to be examined.

- We actively support the Delta Long Term Management Strategy (LTMS) process to improve the permitting process in the delta and which considers the beneficial reuse of dredged materials for levee rehabilitation.

While we greatly appreciate the Task Force's taking on the responsibility for a vision of this magnitude, the Board is quite concerned that local land use agencies have not had a strong presence in the process to date, and we strongly encourage the Governor and the Blue Ribbon Task Force to engage the delta counties and cities in the discussion of land use and governance. Many land use agencies have not been part of the discussions, and have not been contacted as part of recent studies considering land use activities.

At your last meeting, the Task Force asked if Contra Costa County was working with other delta counties and cities in land use and emergency response issues. As indicated by our staff at that meeting, the answer is yes on both counts. The county is a member of the Delta Protection Commission, (which deals primarily with land use issues) and elected officials work together in a number of other forums (CSAC, Mayors Conference, etc.). The County sits as an alternate (for the former Mayor of Rio Vista) on the Stakeholder Coordination Group and as Co-Chair of the CALFED Levees Subcommittee. County staff (and to a lesser extent city staff) meet regularly on any number of delta related issues, including but not limited to emergency response (a long history of cooperation here), habitat conservation planning, wetlands preservation, levee maintenance & rehabilitation, transportation, navigation and flood control. We also work directly with the reclamation districts in our county and in the larger delta.

Thank you for your attention to these matters, which we consider to be vitally important.
If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact our staff, Roberta Goulart at (925) 335-1226.

Sincerely,

Mary N. Piepho
Chair, Board of Supervisors