

**State of California
The Resources Agency
Delta Vision Committee**

Wednesday, June 13, 2007 Public Meeting
Library and Courts Building
914 Capitol Mall, Room 500
Sacramento, CA

Meeting Summary

Delta Vision Committee Attending:

Mike Chrisman, Chair, Secretary for Resources
Dale Bonner, Secretary, Business, Transportation and Housing
A.G. Kawamura, Secretary, Department of Food and Agriculture
Cindy Tuck, P.E., Assistant Secretary for Policy, Cal-EPA
Paul Clanon, Executive Director, California Public Utilities Commission
John Kirlin, Executive Director, Delta Vision

Honored Guest:

Phil Isenberg, Chair, Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force

Welcome and Introductions

Secretary Chrisman opened the meeting by welcoming the committee members, guest and the public to the Delta Vision Committee's second meeting. He briefly reviewed that the committee was established under Executive Order S-17-06 and that they are charged with making recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature about a Delta Vision and later, about a Strategic Plan to implement that vision.

The Delta Vision Committee is a key part of the process laid out under the Executive Order. The Blue Ribbon Task Force and Stakeholder Coordination Group are part of the effort leading to a vision by the end of 2007, with a Strategic Plan and action items developed in 2008. Secretary Chrisman acknowledged that given the current situation, there is some pressure to move up the deadlines to make certain decisions earlier rather than later.

The discussion next turned to the activities of the Blue Ribbon Task Force.

Update on Context of Delta Policy Making: Blue Ribbon Task Force

Chair Isenberg reviewed the Executive Order charge that the task force is to develop independently recommendations regarding a vision of what the Bay-Delta ought to be, hand those recommendations over to the Delta Vision Committee, whose task then is to make final recommendations as to what the government can, should, and might be able to do. The task force recommendations will be completed between October and November,

2007; Chair Isenberg noted the timing of the committee's final recommendations coincides with the Governor's State of the State address and so it may be reasonable to think that there could be some statement about this work in that address. Should any of the recommendations be part of the Administration's plans, Chair Isenberg said, a lot of time can be spent "chewing over" contentious public policy issues, which anything about the Delta certainly will be.

Secretary Chrisman had written a supplemental charge to the Blue Ribbon Task Force that reiterates the independent nature of the task force and outlines the process, which includes working with the Stakeholder Coordination Group. The 43-member group, appointed by Secretary Chrisman, advises and makes recommendations to the task force. The task force is to examine the major subject areas of the Delta, including the nine listed in the Executive Order¹ as well as possible institutional changes and funding mechanisms.

In four days of meetings (March 1 and 2, April 27, and May 31), the task force has tried to get their hands around these subjects and the context of the Bay-Delta; the Bay-Delta is a very important part of the State system, but it is only part of the larger picture of the State. There is a massive amount of information, but it is not presented in forms that are easily understandable. One example is the California Water Plan Update.

The Department of Water Resources updates the California Water Plan every five years and it serves as the foundation of the State's water policy. It gives basic information such as rainfall, snowfall and amounts of water imports—called the water portfolio—and that information is dispersed through more than 1,000 pages in a multi-volume publication.

Chair Isenberg observed that it is human nature to focus on a topic and think that it is the center of the world, but the recent shutting down of the pumps showed that the world did not end and California did not slip off the face of the Earth. He suggested the Delta Vision Committee not assume that all the water in the State goes to all the people in the State through the Delta. Only a portion of the State's water comes from or travels through the Delta, and the amount of water that any water district gets from the Delta varies greatly, from a small percentage of its supply to almost all of its supply.

Emergency water supplies differ between water districts and regions, and in some instances, conveyance systems cannot always take water from one place and transport to another. California is classified as an arid region in the world, and there is no way to effectively capture water and transport it no matter how much we may want to do so.

A review of the statutory and legislative history regarding the Delta shows a complex array of governmental promises, and it is clear that past Legislatures and Governors have

¹ The nine subject areas listed in Executive Order S-17-06 are: the environment, including aquatic and terrestrial functions and biodiversity; land use and land use patterns, including agriculture, urbanization, and housing; transportation, including streets, roads, highways, waterways, and ship channels; utilities, including aqueducts, pipelines, and gas/electric transmission corridors; water supply and quality, municipal/industrial discharges and urban and agricultural runoff; recreation and tourism, including boating, fishing and hunting; flood risk management, including levee maintenance; emergency response; and local and state economies.

promised everything to everyone at one time or another; laws are piled on top of each other, from agricultural statutes and Area of Origin document, to water supply statutes and the Public Trust Doctrine. Through it all, it is clear that the ecosystem and the environment is not improving over time, and that the impacts from urban uses, water exports and agriculture all have something to do with the Delta's environmental quality.

The Blue Ribbon Task Force will complete its vision at the end of 2007 and develop an strategic plan in 2008. As the task force continues to work, Chair Isenberg noted that in his 40 years of public service, the public statements of the parties involved have not changed, but that the private statements have—specifically that no one is saying the Delta is healthy—and that they cannot say publicly what they are saying privately for a variety of reasons. He encouraged the committee members to keep both kinds of statements in mind as they make their recommendations later in the year.

Superimposed upon the already complex nature of the Delta, Chair Isenberg said, are factors like climate change, the lessons from Hurricane Katrina, and the subsidence of Delta islands. Questions arise, such as with the Jones Tract levee break, as to when disaster planning dominates the discussion. It is clear that the potential levee failure is an issue and that while it is less frequently a threat, a catastrophic failure will be disruptive to many things other water supply—the economy, electricity, roads, etc. The task force will develop a vision that will include recommendations regarding catastrophic failure; the vision will be comprehensive and far reaching.

Secretary Kawamura thanked Chair Isenberg for his presentation, and said that adaptation, especially regarding global warming, is a key to this process. Agricultural interests in California are asking what does adaptation at this scale mean, not only for the State, but for the nation and the world as well. There is a need for multi-dimensional thinking and there are tremendous changes for agriculture; this adds to a sense of urgency that many people are feeling.

Delta Vision

Overview. John Kirlin, executive director of Delta Vision, added some additional background about the Delta Vision process at Secretary Chrisman's request.

First, referring to the Executive Order, Director Kirlin stated that the charge is to “develop a durable vision for the sustainable management of the Delta,” and that the intent is not to have a vision that helps us get through the next five years, but to develop a vision that takes a longer perspective—over the next 100 years.

The Status and Trends Report, in the committee's meeting packet [also available online at <http://www.deltavision.ca.gov/DeltaVisionStatusTrends.shtml>] provides good background information to understand the Delta and Suisun Marsh, collectively called “the Delta” in this process, and the area's statewide aspects. Any policy decisions about the Delta will extend beyond the geographical area.

Second, the Delta Vision is a science-informed effort, and the understanding is increasing about the factors that drive the policy choices—compelling information about topics like global climate change, sea level rise, river runoff, etc. Yet these are only a part of what is happening—there are issues about agriculture, energy use and housing, for example—that also must be considered.

The other aspect about science is that science is ever changing as new information or new analysis comes forward. For example, scientists studying Delta smelt are learning new things about that species, and it was as recently as last year that they first discovered where the fish spawned, yet this is a species that is driving water management discussion in the Delta. Another area of scientific change is water quality, where scientists are increasing their understanding of the effects of diminished water quality upon humans. Yet another area of scientific change is levee risk, particularly with seismic events. The Delta Risk Management Strategy report (DRMS, pronounced “dreams”) is coming out within the next few weeks and discusses about the risks to Delta levees and how they affect water flow in the Delta. Levee failures could disrupt State water supply beyond the assumed three-year emergency supply.

Science is informing the Delta Vision process, but it is changing. There has been a lot of investment—especially by the CALFED Bay-Delta Program—in science that has created a much richer foundation for making decisions. Still, part of the Delta Vision will likely include something about how to assess or deal with scientific uncertainty.

Relationship to other Delta Initiatives and Planned Work Flow. Included in the committee’s meeting packet, and distributed as a handout, was a chart of all the activities related to the Delta Vision process. This chart indicated when the committee, the Blue Ribbon Task Force and the Stakeholder Coordination Group meetings were scheduled and dates that respective work products are due. Below the information about the Delta Vision process is a list of all the other ongoing activities related to policy issues regarding the Delta; there is a lot of fragmentation of effort, and part of the Delta Vision process is working to increase communication between and integrate information from these efforts into the Delta Vision. A lot of efforts are coming to a critical point in their respective efforts in the third quarter of 2007, such as the two work products from DRMS and the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan. BDCP is a voluntary effort led by the Resources Agency, the fish agencies, and water exporters in developing a conversation plan to provide a basis for regulatory decisions regarding possible continued water diversions in the Delta. These efforts, as well as many others, will have work products that will ripen at about the same time that the Blue Ribbon Task Force will be determining its initial recommendations for a vision.

Activities to Support Delta Vision Committee

Secretary Chrisman asked Director Kirlin to let the Delta Vision Committee members know when the Blue Ribbon Task Force meetings are, or what the webcast address is, and to remind them along the way what is happening with the Delta Vision and the Blue Ribbon Task Force. Director Kirlin offered to send the committee members copies of the task force’s meeting packet as well, which the members said would be helpful.

Director Kirlin spoke briefly about staffing for the Delta Vision process, most of whom work for the Resources Agency or its departments, although there is someone assigned from the Department of Food and Agriculture who works almost fulltime for Delta Vision. There is a lot of work to do and a short amount of time in which to do it.

Chair Isenberg asked if the secretaries would be willing to commit and assign someone to work full time on the Delta Vision. No decision was made at this meeting regarding that request.

Public Comment

Secretary Chrisman asked for questions from the committee members and the public. He said that a lot is happening and a lot will continue to happen in the coming months.

Steve Schaffer, from the Department of Food and Agriculture, had two questions. First, is the Delta Vision considering science about invasive species as it relates to the pelagic organism decline (POD)? In the response to the presence of Delta smelt at the pumps, is anyone looking at the various stressors in the system, like toxicity, invasive species, and the foodweb issues? The issue is not just about generating science, but about using it.

Director Kirlin responded that the issue of invasive species is called out in the Status and Trends report, and as with the POD, there is a lot of science work going on.

On Monday, June 11, there was a science workshop that looked at the topic of a variable Delta that included a variety of topics, including various stressors. Science continues to evolve and the task force and staff are working to capture and bring into the Delta Vision process as much of the best scientific information as they can. It is likely that the Blue Ribbon Task Force, in making their recommendations, will do so with the acknowledgement that the science will change beneath them. The Blue Ribbon Task Force is committed to have an understanding of the science and likely will include something in their recommendations about dealing with scientific uncertainty.

Second, Mr. Schaffer said that during the last task force meeting they approved the convening of an ecosystem design team. Would the task force consider convening an agricultural design team as well?

Chair Isenberg replied that the Stakeholder Coordination Group asked the task force to convene the ecosystem design team and the task force said yes. None of the ancillary teams formed by the task force will develop a specific plan; the request is to develop more information about the subject.

Director Kirlin added that the ecosystem design team was an expressed interest of the Stakeholder Coordination Group because all other groups start with their own issues as a center point and the group wanted a broader understanding of the ecosystem issues. A similarity that all the interested parties have include a desire for more information about ecosystem function; some of the existing information is presented spatially, other

information—like agricultural practices—are in other formats, and no one is organizing or packaging that information.

The first attempt to this organization was with the ecosystem-geological (eco-geo) team—a group of scientists and specialists that met in May—that began to tease out some of those ideas. [The summary of the eco-geo team is available at: http://deltavision.ca.gov/docs/Exec_Sum_EcoGeo_05-22-07.pdf] The intent is not to develop anything new but to assemble what is out there in a way that is usable for people.

Dave Breninger, from the Placer County Water Agency, said that the vision during the past 100 years has been to develop the estuary of the Delta from brackish water to fresh water because we saw climate in certain ways. What we knew from the past may not be the future, and the state of nature may change—the snowpack may not hold as much water as it had in the past, for example—and there are other implications. The committee needs to think about the kinds of throttles that can be put in place to continue to reexamine the vision as things change; options need to be continually looked at.

Watersheds are extremely critical, as is energy production and use. The committee needs to look at the links between energy and water. Watersheds have a great deal of biomass that could be used to create energy. Healthy forests do not mean we need catastrophic fires in the watershed.

Secretary Kawamura agreed that this is an important consideration, especially the biomass energy involvement. The future of agriculture may be “food, fiber and fuel”—and there are business opportunities for agriculture. We need to think about how we develop solutions that make us independent. He mentioned the San Joaquin Valley group meeting [information available at <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/pressreleases/PressRelease.asp?PRnum=07-051>] at which wind, solar, biomass, and dedicated crops were discussed. Secretary Kawamura said that it is important to build toward the future to realize the potential of today’s technology.

Secretary Chrisman also agreed that healthy forests are important and that catastrophic fires in the watershed destroy systems and limits opportunities to respond to future challenges. The Delta Vision process will assist in the State’s efforts to explore opportunities, create markets, and create management regimes that have broad beneficial effects. For example, we need to reintroduce fire as part of the forestry management regime. Our challenges are ahead of us, yet we need to remind ourselves how these issues are all interrelated.

Secretary Bonner offered a different perspective. One reality, he said, to keep in mind is the population growth and urbanization, and to step back and look at the substantial amount of economic activity in the State that also has national and international implications.

In the future there will be a significant increase of imports and exports; the Port of Oakland plans on tripling its 2 million container capacity in the future, and is relying on the Port of Stockton and Port of Sacramento as part of that expansion. There will be a greater reliance

on the railroad to move goods. As for the national interest, about half of the international trade of the U.S. comes through California, so there are important economic interests to consider as well.

There are substantial and vocal business advocates that have a great interest in how goods are moved; there is a Goods Movement Action Plan that addresses the increased use of road and water ways [see <http://www.arb.ca.gov/gmp/gmp.htm> for more information].

Secretary Bonner saw a tsunami of a different sort—the level of trade for which the State is preparing to accommodate is substantial and will create additional pressures, even for agriculture who will want to get their goods out to market from the Central Valley even as they look for new markets, for example, in China. These just add to the challenge we have to plan for.

Secretary Chrisman asked for additional comment or questions from the committee or public. There was none, and the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting of the Delta Vision Committee has not yet been set.