

**Statement of Randy Fiorini  
Chair, Delta Vision Work Group  
Association of California Water Agencies**

Workshop of the Delta Vision Committee  
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Long Beach Convention Center

Good morning, distinguished members of the Delta Vision Committee. I'm Randy Fiorini, past president of the Association of California Water Agencies. On behalf of the ACWA Board I would like to thank the Delta Vision Committee for the opportunity to participate in today's proceedings and for the opportunity to briefly share with you ACWA's comments on the Delta Vision Task Force Strategic Plan.

ACWA represents 450 public water agencies located throughout California. Our members include small, medium and large agencies, serving urban and agricultural users in the Delta, above the Delta and below the Delta. ACWA members collectively are responsible for 90% of the water delivered in this state.

ACWA has closely followed the 20 month long Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force process. In fact, the task force concept was a key recommendation in ACWA's 2005 water policy document, "No Time to Waste: A Blueprint for California Water." We commend the task force members and staff for the constructive work they have done and tremendous time and effort they dedicated to developing the Delta Vision Strategic Plan.

Upon reading this Strategic Plan, one immediately sees that the plan takes a comprehensive view of the Delta and includes an array of ambitious timelines and target dates for actions. Ambitious as they may be, ACWA believes these actions should be implemented with due care and addressed with a sense of urgency. There is no time to waste in meeting the challenges that we face in the Delta.

ACWA strongly believes that the plan's foundational goal – placing equal value on restoring the Delta ecosystem and creating a more reliable water supply for California – is the right place to start. These co-equal goals must be the desired outcome that all other actions are measured against.

The Task Force received a great deal of input about restoring the Delta ecosystem and many of those recommendations can be found in Goal 3. ACWA supports many of the action steps recommended, such as habitat improvements, re-evaluating wastewater treatment plant discharge impacts and increasing San Joaquin River flood conveyance capacity. But the actions should also address other stressors that are playing a role in the Delta's decline.

Although invasive species problems are addressed, ACWA is concerned that not enough emphasis has been placed on the detrimental effects that non-native fish species, such as large mouth bass and stripers, can have on out-migrating juvenile salmon. Stronger actions to eliminate this problem need to be established.

References to requiring increased flows from upstream sources for habitat fail to acknowledge long standing upstream water rights. Long standing water rights of upstream agencies must be acknowledged. ACWA recommends a collaborative approach when seeking additional water from existing supplies upstream.

Another element of the plan that is not emphasized enough is the need to phase the implementation of various actions. As an example, if increased flows from upstream sources are determined to be beneficial, then our water storage infrastructure must be improved first to allow for additional flows to benefit the ecosystem without devastating impacts to the economy.

ACWA member agencies are already leading local and regional efforts to promote water conservation, efficiency and sustainable use. We support the statewide recommendations found in Goal 4.

The State Water Project and the Central Valley Project, designed and built nearly five decades ago, have utilized the Delta as a hub for water deliveries beyond the Delta. These incredible projects have contributed mightily to California's economic growth for many years. At the time these important projects were conceived and developed, the potential negative impacts on Delta ecosystem sustainability were not fully considered. ACWA agrees with the conclusion that today we have a Delta ecosystem that is in crisis and a water system that needs better water management assets and practices designed to meet both water supply and environmental objectives.

ACWA supports actions called for in Goal 5, including designing, building and operating new surface and groundwater storage. The current system of levees in the Delta will fail and without alternative conveyance facilities the reliable supply of water to millions of Californians is threatened. Therefore ACWA strongly supports a planning effort that will lead to building a reliable means of water conveyance in or around the Delta. We also support the action steps outlined to improve flood management measures, including creating a flood bypass along the lower San Joaquin River

One of the more controversial recommendations, Goal 7, deals with governance. Three years ago the Little Hoover Commission examined the governance of CALFED and the role of the California Bay-Delta Authority. The Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force and the Little Hoover Commission came to similar conclusions regarding the leadership weaknesses of CALFED, but came to very different recommendations about what changes are needed to effectively manage the Delta waterways and ecosystem. The Little Hoover Commission recommended that the Governor assign the Secretary of Resources with leadership responsibility over a senior management team comprised of the primary state and federal departments and lead scientist.

In contrast, the Delta Vision Strategic Plan recommends, in part, that a new group, the California Delta Ecosystem and Water Council, be appointed and given authority, including regulatory authority, to manage activities in the Delta. While both approaches have merit, ACWA believes that the Little Hoover Commission recommendations, if fully implemented, would achieve the desired outcome for effective governance of Delta matters by utilizing the agencies and authority that already exists.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present some of ACWA's views regarding this critically important Delta Vision process.

We look forward to submitting formal comments to the Delta Vision Committee in the very near future.