

## **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WATER COMMITTEE**

### **DELTA VISION CABINET COMMITTEE HEARING ON BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE STRATEGIC PLAN**

Long Beach Convention Center

Seaside Ballroom

300 East Ocean Boulevard

Friday, November 21, 2008

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The Southern California Water Committee has long advocated for a long term solution that considers all Delta values and supports the Delta Blue Ribbon Task Force's vision of co-equal goals of a sustainable ecosystem and improved water reliability. We look to the work of this Cabinet Committee to transform those co-equal goals into specific short-term, mid-term, and long-term actions.

For the SCWC, the greatest priority is structural changes in the Delta that resolve the Delta's chronic water supply and environmental problems that stem from historical reliance on through-Delta solutions only.

We urge immediate implementation of actions that better channel in-Delta flows to insure Delta ecological sustainability, such as preventing native fish from being drawn into the state and federal pumps during through-Delta conveyance of water supplies. Simultaneously, decisions and actions necessary to build an isolated facility that provides flexibility and reliability of water supply conveyance capabilities around the Delta must be taken now, to provide long term protection for both the Delta's ecosystem and water supplies.

We do not need further feasibility studies and cannot wait to begin implementation of key structural investments to fix and improve export water supplies and ecosystem functions. The SCWC respectfully urges the Cabinet Committee to make an unambiguous commitment now to a dual conveyance system that proceeds with in-Delta and around-Delta fixes in parallel, by designing a dual conveyance system as not just a preferred concept, but as the designated Project under the California Environmental Quality Act, for which environmental assessments will be prepared and against which other alternatives will be considered. Design, environmental certification and permitting of the construction of new dual conveyance system must move swiftly, recognizing that natural forces such as floods and earthquakes could instantly alter and threaten the integrity of the Delta, as well as compromise drinking water for 25 million Californians.

Increased storage is integrally linked to the success of a dual conveyance system. The Blue Ribbon Task Force recognized that expanded storage and improved reservoir operations could provide needed flexibility to move water through and around the Delta at appropriate times and store it until it is needed, increasing the likelihood of success of a Delta fix. The SCWC believes that storage is unquestionably needed both upstream of

the Delta, in order for releases to increase Delta inflow, and downstream of the Delta, to allow export users to access it directly. We ask that the Cabinet Committee direct Department of Water Resources to expeditiously complete the on-going studies of various storage sites and begin construction of new surface and groundwater storage projects by selecting preferred concepts that work in conjunction with a dual conveyance system, and implementing their design, environmental assessments, and permitting.

While the SCWC agrees that much needed organization clarity is provided by the proposed addition of new entities such as the Delta Conservancy, the SCWC is troubled by the broad charter for implementation and governance by the Blue Ribbon Task Force's recommendations. While we understand the need for better coordination and oversight of the Delta Vision and the Delta Vision strategic plan, we find the scope of proposed organizations, particularly the California Delta Ecosystem and Water Council (CDEW), overreaching, doomed to controversy, and lacking focus. Existing agencies are better equipped to execute and administer the Delta Vision's strategic plan.

The Delta needs effective governance, not another super-oversight agency with attendant layers of staff, budget, regulations, and second opinions. With appropriate delegation and proper resource allocation, current agencies and authorities within existing state agencies are sufficient to implement the substance of a Delta solution. We encourage the Cabinet Committee to consider ways that utilize existing state agencies, such as the Department of Water Resources, to support implementation of the Delta Vision's strategic plan, including the design, environmental assessment, permitting, and construction of a dual conveyance system and additional storage necessary to fix the Delta as described above.

The Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force undertook an historic endeavor and the SCWC congratulates them on defining the Delta's problems and identifying that physical changes are needed to improve the system. We appreciate this opportunity to share with you our thoughts about how to move forward, from strategies to action.