



Shasta County

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September 23, 2008

Mr. Phil Isenburg, Chair
Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force
State of California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Delta Vision Strategic Plan Dated August 14, 2008

Dear Mr. Isenburg:

The Blue Ribbon Task Force has embarked on a bold program. It seeks to insure the health of the Delta and to improve export capabilities. The Vision and Strategic Plan (collectively, "Vision") seeks a broad mandate. Yet problems remain. This initiative builds upon CALFED, with similarly bleak prospects of success.

Programmatic vs. Specific

The Vision seeks a holistic path to Delta sustainability. This is a logical approach to such a large and varied ecosystem. But a holistic approach that ignores operational realities will not yield a sustainable ecosystem. Disjointed state and Federal laws fixate upon isolated actions and single-species protections. A difficult year for one species will inevitably lead to additional water restrictions for users. These mandates drive state and federal actions. The Vision needs to recognize and address this discontinuity.

Cost

Strategy 17 indicates that up to \$80 billion in Delta capital costs may accrue over the next 15 years. Operating costs are not quantified. Previous versions of the Strategic Plan have lamented the Legislature's penchant for establishing agencies to fix the Delta, only to leave them languishing for lack of funding. These dynamics remain, and will likely be exacerbated in the current fiscal situation. Strategy 17 tries to allay this concern through "beneficiary pays." This was a CALFED maxim; attractive in theory but problematic to implement.

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Governance

The Vision notes the many agencies that have a role in the Delta. Money and control are thus squandered through uncoordinated efforts. The Vision proposes to improve this situation through a "California Delta Ecosystem & Water Council" (CDEW). Money and power would thus be centralized. But leadership would not. Each agency will retain its own goals. CALFED demonstrated that they will pursue them, to the exclusion of others. When deliveries, levies or species fail, each party will serve their own interests. Strong leadership is needed, before money and control are concentrated into a new agency.

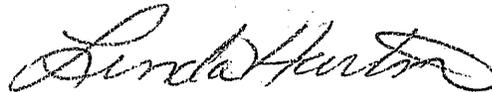
Water Rights

There is a perception that the Delta Vision would erode guarantees that the northern and eastern reaches of the state have long relied upon. California's water rights system is a reliable and resilient mechanism to allocate a scarce resource (water). Any such mechanism must set priorities. Delta lands, and other Areas of Origin, thus enjoy preference in the allocation of water supplies. This concept has long been enshrined in California water law, promoting beneficial use for the good of all Californians. A strong and specific affirmation of the Area of Origin statutes would build support for the Vision.

The Delta is an ecosystem, a water project, and a thriving community. The Task Force has invigorated discussion towards resolving the conflicts that are inherent in this model. Some new opportunities have emerged on levee protection and other fronts. But these ideas are still inchoate. In its present form, the Strategic Plan offers sustainability only in litigation and conflict.

Should you have any questions, please contact Pat Minturn or Eric Wedemeyer at (530) 225-5661.

Very truly yours,



Linda Hartman, Chairman
Board of Supervisors
County of Shasta
State of California

LH/PJM/mlc

c: Doug LaMalfa, Assemblyman District 2
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Dianne Feinstein, U.S. Senator

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