



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
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29 SEP 2008

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

CESPD-DE

Mr. Phil Isenberg, Chair
Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Isenberg,

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) appreciates the opportunity to provide input on how the Corps can facilitate implementation of the Delta Vision Strategic Plan (Fourth Staff Draft of September 12, 2008). We see the Delta Vision Strategic Plan as a critical initiative to address various water resources problems in the Delta and regionally across the state of California. I want to address our Corps responsibilities in the Delta, ongoing efforts and make some recommendations.

The Corps has three primary mission areas for which we can bring expertise and resources to address the problems identified in the Delta Vision Strategic Plan. These mission areas are ecosystem restoration, flood risk management, and navigation dredging and beneficial reuse. Some additional Corps mission areas that also apply in the Delta include our regulatory responsibilities under the Clean Water Act (CWA), emergency response under PL 84-99, and water quality and water supply projects.

The Corps has extensive experience in large scale multi-purpose, multi-stakeholder collaborative projects bringing stakeholders together to identify workable solutions. The Corps, with local partners, is currently conducting various feasibility studies within the Delta: Delta Islands and Levees, CALFED Bay Delta program, Delta LTMS, SF Bay to Stockton (Ship Channel), and the Sacramento River Deep Water Ship Channel. These address ecosystem restoration, flood risk management, water supply, water quality and navigation challenges in the Delta. We look forward to synchronizing these studies with the Delta Vision Strategic Plan. Specifically, the Delta Islands and Levees study will incorporate the results of the Delta Risk Management Study (DRMS) and the efforts of the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Taskforce.

The Corps is also engaged in other ongoing work. As part of the CALFED Levee Stability (construction) Program, the Corps has initiated report preparation for Delta-wide small-scale levee stability construction projects as an interim measure to assist Reclamation Districts on their most fragile reaches of levee. The Corps continues to provide emergency assistance to the Delta under the Flood Control and Coastal Emergency Act (PL 84-99), which authorizes the Corps to undertake activities including disaster preparedness, Advance Measures, emergency operations (Flood Response and Post Flood Response), and rehabilitation of flood control works threatened or destroyed by flooding. Finally, the Corps is also part of a multi-agency Delta Emergency Response planning effort.

One of the Corps' responsibilities is the Federal flood risk reduction system in the Central Valley of California, including the operation of a system of reservoirs. The Delta Vision Strategic Plan may have a significant impact on the flood risk reduction system in the Central Valley and the Delta. Because the flood risk reduction system was constructed for an authorized purpose, any changes or modifications to the system and its operation must be completely analyzed and may require reauthorization by Congress.

The study of reservoir re-operation is a very complicated task that could contribute significantly to implementation of the Delta Vision Strategic Plan. However, to complete the re-operation studies by 2012 may be difficult. Although authority and funding for this effort has not been programmed, the Corps is ready to assist. We recommend that these tasks be initiated as soon as possible.

The Corps Regulatory Program has authority (under the CWA of 1972) over activities in navigable waterways and dredging and filling in the waters of the United States. Corps regulatory planners are available to assist with early involvement, consultation and collaboration with Resource Agencies. Recognizing the significance of some of the proposed conceptual plans being considered, such early collaboration would facilitate the permitting process and permits may be completed more efficiently.

Both the SF Bay to Stockton and the Sacramento River Deep Water Ship Channel Navigation Improvement projects pose significant economic and environmental opportunities and challenges. The Corps anticipates that both of these projects might be constructed during implementation of Delta Vision Strategic Plan. Their cumulative impacts related to salinity intrusion, water quality, biological resources, sediment budgets, economic growth, and other interconnected issues will need to be assessed for successful implementation of the Delta Vision Strategic Plan.

We support the Delta Vision Strategic Plan's draft recommendation to form a consortium to strategize land use transition on Sherman, Twitchell, and Jersey Islands. The SF Bay to Stockton and Sacramento River Deep Water Ship Channel Navigation Improvement Projects could potentially produce up to 24 million cubic yards of dredged material within the Delta. We could provide this material for beneficial reuse, for levee rehabilitation, subsidence mitigation, and ecosystem restoration.

The proposed new Delta Protection Commission (DPC) addresses some of the governance issues. As for rules governing Corps participation on a State Commission, please know, at most, Corps representation would be in a non-voting liaison capacity. Additionally, participation by the Corps on the DPC raises conflict of interest issues because of the DPC's appellate authority regarding proposed land uses.

The Delta is a unique resource and place and the Delta Vision Strategic Plan is a good start on making the vision a reality. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers is poised and ready to contribute to achievement of the Delta Vision goals of establishment of the Delta ecosystem and a reliable water supply for California, and to reduce risks to people, resources, and Federal and state interests in the Delta.

Sincerely,



John R. McMahon
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
Commanding