



NEWS RELEASE

Association of California Water Agencies

910 K Street, Suite 100 · Sacramento, California 95814-3512

916/441-4545 · FAX 916/441-7893 · <http://www.acwa.com>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Jennifer Persike, ACWA, 916/441-4545. Additional contacts at the end of release.

Coalition Urges New Direction for Delta Stewardship Council

Letter Says Draft Plan's Excessive Regulatory Approach Puts Process at Risk

Sacramento, CA – A coalition of water agencies, local governments, associations and other organizations is urging the Delta Stewardship Council to move away from the regulatory approach of its latest draft Delta Plan and return its focus to the charge laid out for the council in the 2009 comprehensive water package enacted by the Legislature.

In a letter submitted to the council, representatives of 15 organizations representing water users and local public agencies covering virtually the entire state voiced concern with the latest draft's continued emphasis on regulating local and state agencies and duplicating existing efforts, rather than coordinating and synthesizing such activities to achieve the co-equal goals identified in the 2009 legislation. Signatories to the letter included water agencies within, above and below the Delta; Solano County; and statewide agricultural and business organizations.

The third draft of the plan, though improved in some ways over the second draft, proposes a series of regulatory acts instead of a cohesive, long-term plan for the Delta, the letter notes. The approach effectively ignores good work already under way in ecosystem restoration, water supply reliability, Delta preservation and flood control by other agencies and instead calls for the council to reinvent the wheel in the form of a new regulatory apparatus.

“The council should help the approximately 200 agencies with authority in the Delta to work better together, not just become the 201st regulatory agency,” the letter states. “If additional regulations had been the goal, the Legislature could have easily abolished or transferred those agencies' authority and obligations to the council. Instead, the Legislature recognized that achieving the co-equal goals would only be possible if the council provided the coordination amongst the other agencies necessary to resolve the problems facing the Delta, not duplicate those agencies' efforts.”

ACWA Executive Director Timothy Quinn said the next draft of the plan should more clearly define its long-term vision for the Delta. “The emphasis must be implementing a broadly supported plan, not more regulations. The plan should embrace a comprehensive approach that includes necessary investments to improve water supply reliability and proactive steps to deal with all environmental stressors,” Quinn said. “And it must be done in a way that protects the unique character of the Delta and water supply reliability in all regions of the state.”

Mike Hardesty, general manager of Reclamation District #2068, called it notable that diverse interests agree a different approach is needed. “The importance of developing an equitable and workable Delta Plan requires the difficult task of setting aside our long-term fundamental and seemingly intractable differences to focus and agree that the current approach of the draft Delta Plan is taking the state in the wrong direction,” Hardesty said.

John Woodling, executive director of the Regional Water Authority, urged a more collaborative approach to the Delta Plan. “Resolving the Delta crisis is going to take collaborative engagement from water users throughout the state, yet the onerous requirements proposed in the draft Delta Plan will drive people away from being a part of the solution,” Woodling said. “No one benefits if the council doesn’t get this right.”

Rich Atwater, executive director of the Southern California Water Committee, said the sustainability of California’s economy depends on investing in long-term Delta solutions. “Accomplishing the co-equal goals of water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration is the path forward, but it can only happen through a collaborative process that respects local and regional efforts and keeps all parties engaged,” Atwater said.

Tom Nassif, president and CEO of Western Growers, said there is much at stake in the Delta Plan process for California agriculture. “Resolving Delta problems is critical to our water supplies and critical to our future. We have to make sure this process succeeds if agriculture is to remain strong in California.”

Signatories to the letter included representatives of ACWA, Northern California Water Association, State & Federal Contractors Water Agency, San Joaquin River Group Authority, Friant Water Authority, Mountain Counties Water Resources Association, California Chamber of Commerce, California Farm Bureau Federation, Western Growers, Regional Council of Rural Counties, Solano County, Southern California Water Committee, California Building Industry Association, California Business Properties Association and the California Latino Water Coalition.

The letter is available at www.acwa.com.

Additional contact information:

Mike Hardesty, Reclamation District #2068, 707-678-5412

John Woodling, Regional Water Authority, 916-967-7692

Tom Nassif, Western Growers, 916-446-1435

Rich Atwater, Southern California Water Committee, 818-760-2121

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