

Our Vision for the California Delta

The Delta is in crisis, and each day brings us closer to a major disaster. What the nation learned from New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina is the terrible price of waiting. The Delta's problems can wait no longer:

The health of its ecosystem is not sustainable over the long-term and regional climate change of even one meter above current sea level promises to inundate many Delta towns and its infrastructure of highways, energy corridors, railroads, wildlife resources and its economic base of agriculture and tourism.

A two-in-three chance of a major earthquake within the next few years in or near the Delta make its levees vulnerable to sudden collapse. In addition, increased urbanization poses an imminent threat to the Delta by placing more residents and their property in a floodplain.

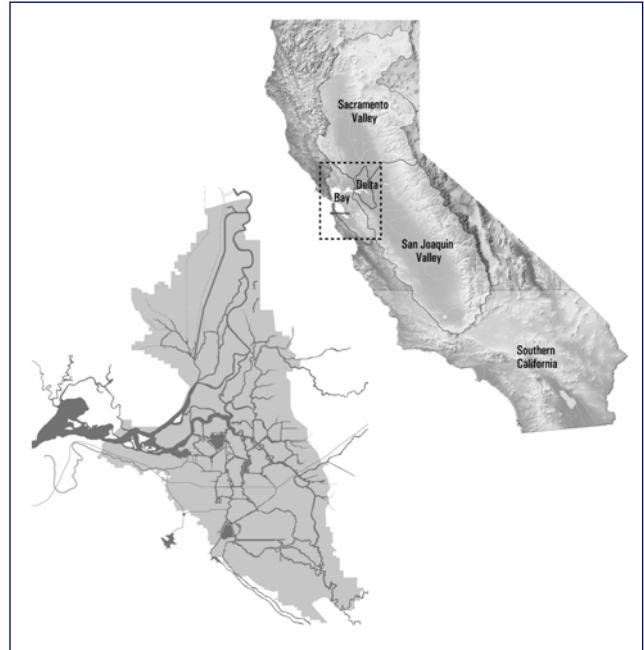
The vision's recommendations are designed to be implemented together as an integrated solution and then work together in an interdependent fashion to achieve success.

An integrated solution is vital as the Delta cannot be "fixed" by any single action. Nor can California's water needs be met by any single action. No matter what policy choices are made, Californians must also change their relationship toward the environment and water. Conservation must become the next great cause toward quality of life, following in the footsteps of energy conservation. Delay in any of the important areas discussed in this vision will only make California's water problems and the Delta's ecosystem woes worse over the next decades.

For those who rush to discuss Delta water conveyance as if no other issue is of importance, the Task Force cautions that decisions about storage and conveyance flow from all 12 recommendations in their vision, and cannot be decided by themselves.

Established by Governor Schwarzenegger's Executive Order S-17-06, the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force was to "develop a durable vision for sustainable management of the Delta" with the goal of "... managing the Delta over the long term to restore and maintain identified functions and values that are determined to be important to the environmental quality of the Delta and the economic and social well-being of the people of the state."

It also directed the Task Force to develop a Strategic Implementation Plan by October 2008.



The Delta formed by the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers is a critical habitat for more than 500 species, hub of the state's major water conveyance systems, and crossed by major transportation and utility corridors.

Delta Vision's 12 Integrated and Linked Recommendations

1. Delta ecosystem and a reliable water supply for California are the primary, co-equal goals for sustainable management of the Delta.
2. The California Delta is a unique and valued area, warranting recognition and special legal status from the State of California.
3. The Delta ecosystem must function as an integral part of a healthy estuary.
4. California's water supply is limited and must be managed with significantly more efficiency to be adequate for its future population, growing economy and vital environment.
5. The foundation for policy making about California water resources must be the longstanding constitutional principles of "reasonable use" and "public trust;" these principles are particularly important and applicable to the Delta.
6. The goals of conservation, efficiency and sustainable use must drive California water policies.

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12 Recommendations (cont.)

7. A revitalized Delta ecosystem will require reduced diversions, or changes in patterns and timing of those diversions, upstream, within the Delta and exported from the Delta at critical times.
8. New facilities for conveyance and storage, and better linkage between the two, are needed to better manage California's water resources the estuary and exports.
9. Major investments in the California Delta and the statewide water management system must be consistent with, and integrate specific policies in this vision. In particular, these strategic investments must strengthen selected levees, improve floodplain management and improve water circulation and quality.
10. The current boundaries and governance system of the Delta must be changed. It is essential to have an independent body with authority to achieve the

This vision was developed over 14 days of public Task Force meetings since March 2007. It was informed by recommendations of a 43-member Stakeholder Coordination Group, advice of Delta Science Advisors, efforts of departments and agencies of the State of California and by public comments.

Chaired by Phil Isenberg, other Task Force members are Monica Florian, Richard M. Frank, Thomas McKernan, Sunne Wright McPeak, William K. Reilly and Raymond Seed.

- co-equal goals of ecosystem revitalization and adequate water supply for California while also recognizing the importance of the Delta as a unique and valued area. This body must have secure funding and the ability to approve spending, planning and water export levels.
11. Discouraging inappropriate urbanization of the Delta is critical both to preserve the Delta's unique character and to ensure adequate public safety.
 12. Institutions and policies for the Delta should be designed for resiliency and adaptation.

Near-Term Actions to Protect the Delta

The Task Force also identified Near-Term Actions that must be taken in the very near future because threats to the Delta and Suisun Marsh are so serious. These focus on preparing for disasters in or around the Delta, protecting its ecosystem and water supply system from urban encroachment, and starting work soon on short-term improvements to both the ecosystem and the water supply system.

These proposed actions should be initiated quickly with an attempt to build upon existing organizations and authorities, but not be bound by existing shortcomings. They are:

1. State government should immediately begin acquiring title or easements to floodplains, establish flood bypasses where feasible and discourage residential building in flood-prone areas. Land that could provide flood protection is being threatened by urban development as this report is being written.
2. The Governor should immediately issue an Executive Order that provides guidance consistent with this vision on inappropriate land development in the Delta.
3. State government should promptly set appropriate standards for all levee improvements to protect heavily populated areas and key parts of the water

delivery system and other infrastructure. The State of California should also use available bond funds to address strategic levee and floodplain improvements.

4. State government should embark upon a comprehensive series of emergency management and preparation actions within a few months. California cannot wait for a flood before planning a response.
5. State government should promptly incorporate expected sea level increases into decision-making and improve knowledge of constructing more secure and affordable levees.
6. High priority ecosystem revitalization projects should be pursued aggressively by the responsible agencies and departments, upon direction by the Governor.
7. Improvements in the current water conveyance and groundwater surface water storage systems should be pursued as rapidly as possible by the responsible agencies and departments, upon direction by the Governor.

The Task Force urges the Governor and the Legislature to incorporate these immediate steps in executive actions, upcoming bond measures or related legislation.