The Central Valley
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Delta Flows: The Good, the Bad, the Confused and the Ugly

by Dan Bacher
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Here is the latest Delta Flows, the Weekly Highlights from Restore the Delta, written by Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, campaign director of Restore the Delta.

"Restore the Delta has heard rumblings from Sacramento that legislation calling for the peripheral canal will be introduced any day now in some type of water bond package," said Barrigan-Parrilla. "However, the details of financing such a project will be delayed until a later date. Can our legislators really be thinking about creating a bond without working out the financing when California is on the brink of complete financial collapse?"

Barrigan-Parrilla is advising all Restore the Delta Supporter to plan on attending the Assembly water, Parks and Wildlife Committee on propose Delta bills on July 7, 2009 at 9 a.m. in Room 4202.

"The numerous proposed Delta bills will be heard as a package," she said. "As final language becomes available through the end of the month, we will share our findings with you so that you can prepare to comment at this hearing."

Greetings!

"In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act." ---George Orwell

Reaching Restore the Delta

During the recent move, Restore the Delta has been on and off line multiple times due to technical difficulties, and has also had problems and interruption in phone service. We are just beginning to recover from all the various forms of technical drama and are working to be in regular communication. We thank you all for your patience.

The Good, The Bad, The Confused, and the Ugly

Many different legislative initiatives have been appearing at both the Federal and State level centered on solving the Delta crisis. This newsletter is dedicated to analyzing these efforts.

The Good

First, the good. After a great deal of consultation with our Delta supporters, Restore the Delta has decided to support Senator Lois Wolk's Conservancy Bill SB 458. We believe that it is one piece of a multi-prong effort toward improving governance, funding, and most importantly future management of the Delta. This conservancy bill provides, thus far, the best representation of Delta interests within the structure of a state conservancy.

We also applaud Senator Wolk's consistent effort to remind her colleagues that Delta communities and people have to be part of any future governance changes within the Delta.

While Restore the Delta does not believe that a conservancy alone will solve the primary crisis in the Delta - the crisis of poor water quality and insufficient flows. But a well funded

conservancy that represents Delta farming and ecological interests, along with more than adequate fresh water flows into the Delta and a permanent reduction in exports, can help to bring about Delta restoration.

Our one question for the Senator regarding the bill, however, still relates to fees. We want to see fees paid into the conservancy to be used only for Delta conservancy projects.

More good. Last week on the floor of the US Congress, Congressman Mike Thompson (D - District 1) and Congressman George Miller (D-District 7) successfully defended the Delta and salmon fisheries from an exemption to the Endangered Species Act. In a tight roll call vote last week, the House voted "no" on Congressman Nunes' s amendment to the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2010 to override the biological opinion on salmon.

The Bad

The June 2, 2009 Federal Salmon Biological Opinion calls for the restoration of river flows into the Delta as part of salmon preservation and restoration. This report, which includes the best available science reviewed by five independent science groups including the CalFed Science Board, has angered Central Valley Congressman Devin Nunes (R-District 21) and Congressman Dennis Cardoza (D-District 18). They blame the economic hardship experienced by people in their disricts on a lack of Delta water flowing into their communities.

Never mind that the Westlands Water District has received 86% of its promised water deliveries this year and that agricultural employment is at an all time high in Fresno County. As reported back in May, the primary driver of unemployment in the Central Valley is the sharp decline in construction. In contrast, the California commercial salmon industry is experiencing 100% employment as a result of years of excessive water exports from the Delta.

Staff members from Congressman Cardoza's office also told Restore the Delta that the science for the biological opinion was inadequate and that Congressman Cardoza is introducing legislation for yet another "comprehensive study" of what is causing the real decline in the Delta.

While Restore the Delta staff concurs with Congressman Cardoza's staff that municipal discharge into the Delta has a horrible impact on water quality and that the State Water Resources Control Board should enforce water quality standards, without adequate fresh water flows into the Delta the municipal discharge problem is exacerbated and salinity increases. As far as we can tell, the goal behind this comprehensive study is to once again shift 100% blame for Delta water quality and quantity problems onto the people of the Delta, rather than using the best available science to begin policies of enforcement throughout the entire California watershed.

Part of Congressman Cardoza's district is made up of constituents who live in the secondary zone of the Delta. Restore the Delta is deeply disappointed that Congressman Cardoza has brushed aside his Delta constituents in order to protect the corporate farming portion of his District.

The Confused

What was even more disturbing is that Congressman Jerry McNerney (D-District 11) abandoned his Delta constituents and voted in favor of the Nunes amendment. Congressman McNerney's staff said that it was a difficult vote for the Congressman and that he was

concerned about water deliveries for the City of Stockton and Stockton East water users.

Unfortunately, Congressman McNerney did not consult with Restore the Delta staff and other area activists on suggestions for helping agencies in need of water in San Joaquin County. Instead, he chose one group of constituents against the majority of his supporters and voters in San Joaquin County. Even worse, he voted against the Delta farming and fishing economies.

The people of the Delta have a long memory, and we will keep a close eye on Congressman McNerney's votes from this day forward.

The Ugly

Restore the Delta has heard rumblings from Sacramento that legislation calling for the peripheral canal will be introduced any day now in some type of water bond package. However, the details of financing such a project will be delayed until a later date.

Can our legislators really be thinking about creating a bond without working out the financing when California is on the brink of complete financial collapse? Are they really so desperate to say that they have solved the water needs of California as a way to divert public anger over their inability to fix the budget? Can they really be thinking about spending billions to build a pipe to move water from the north to a limited number of corporate Central Valley farmers while passing on the expense to California water rate payers?

Can they be using seismic threat and climate change as the excuses for building this pipe, when seismic threat and climate change could bring about even greater damage to one central pipe that is 2.5 football fields wide, rather than a Delta with a disperse levee system? Can they be thinking about building a pipe that will destroy thousands and thousands of acres of prime farm land that produces food for all of California? Can they be thinking about building a pipe that will be wider than many areas of the actual Sacramento River? It seems so.

That is why we are asking all our Restore the Delta supporters to plan on attending the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee Hearing on proposed Delta bills on July 7, 2009 at 9 a.m. in Room 4202. The numerous proposed Delta bills will be heard as a package. As final language becomes available through the end of the month, we will share our findings with you so that you can prepare to comment at this hearing.

It's time to let our legislators know that we want real solutions to break dependence on Delta water exports and to create new water supplies for our neighbors throughout California. It's time to let them know what a bad idea the peripheral canal is for the environment, Delta communities, and the state budget.

Restore the Delta is working everyday through public education and citizen activism to ensure the restoration and future sustainability of the California Delta. Your general contribution can help us sponsor outreach events, enable us to educate Californians on what makes the Delta so special, and assist us in building a coalition that will be recognized by government water agencies as they make water management decisions.
Restore the Delta is a charitable 501(c)3 organization. Donations are tax deductible.

Restore the Delta is a grassroots campaign committed to making the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta fishable, swimmable, drinkable, and farmable to benefit all of California. Restore the Delta - a coalition of Delta residents, business leaders, civic organizations, community groups, faith-based communities, union locals, farmers, fishermen, and environmentalists - seeks to strengthen the health of the estuary and the well-being of Delta communities. Restore the Delta works to improve water quality so that fisheries and farming can thrive together again in

the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Sincerely,

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