



Date: September 5, 2013

To: Executive Board

From: Judy Kelly
Director, San Francisco Estuary Partnership

Subject: **Background on Bay Delta Conservation Plan Presentation and Speakers**

Summary

Pivotal decisions are pending in Sacramento that will affect the quality and quantity of habitats in the Bay-Delta region; how much water will be required to flow from the Bay's watershed into the Bay-Delta estuary; and how water is moved to regions south of the Delta.

These decisions will have significant long-term impacts to the quality of life and economy of the San Francisco Bay-Delta region. Although conflict over water use and availability in California dates back many decades, state law now calls for "coequal goals":

... Of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. The coequal goals shall be achieved in a manner that protects and enhances the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place." Delta Reform Act, 2009

One of the key processes intended to implement the coequal goals is the **Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)**.

The BDCP is a multi-species, 50-year conservation road map for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta that proposes new tunnels as water intakes on the Sacramento River and associated conveyance facilities. Reflecting the coequal goals, it seeks to assure that water continues to move from the north state southward while protecting the fragile Delta. It is being funded by a number of federal and state water contractors and is being prepared as both a Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) per the state's habitat conservation regulations, and as a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) under federal Endangered Species Act regulations. Along with conveyance recommendations, it contains actions which by law should support recovery of the 57 covered species; it is intended to result in long-term regulatory authorizations for the state and federal water projects.

Preliminary draft documents were released in March of 2013. Final chapters of the extensive Administrative Draft BDCP were released to the public on May 29th and public

Background on Bay Delta Conservation Plan Presentation and Speakers

September 5, 2013

2

meetings were held in Sacramento in July. According to the BDCP website, a public review Draft BDCP and formal comment period will be announced by October 1, 2013.

The potential benefits, costs, impacts and policy implications of the BDCP are enormous and, as would be expected, are controversial. These issues include: How much water will be conveyed for delivery to contractors versus reserved for ecosystem restoration? Is the BDCP justified in relying on restoring wetland habitat as a substitute for improving flows for the environment? Are the land use/local economy impacts of new conveyance on the Delta region acceptable, and are there alternative approaches (levee improvement, different conveyance capacity) that should be pursued? Should water users in areas that export water from the Delta be required to reduce their reliance on the Delta? How will the BDCP be financed?

To help frame the BDCP proposal for the Executive Board, two speakers bring their perspectives; Paul Helliker, Deputy Director California Department of Water Resource, Delta and Statewide Water Management, will present an overview of the BDCP. Gary Bobker, of The Bay Institute will comment on the proposal from the perspective of a coalition of environmental organizations which has been closely engaged in this process.

Relevant to these presentations is Resolution 08-12, passed in May of last year by this Executive Board, calling for certain outcomes from the BDCP. In part, the Resolution states—

“That protection and restoration of a healthy sustainable Bay-Delta ecosystem includes adequate water quality, outflow and water supply to support fisheries, wildlife and habitat in perpetuity;

That [planning processes recognize that] the Bay-Delta ecosystem has been in a state of “chronic drought” due to current water management practices and [to] ensure adequate Delta outflows to San Francisco Bay to support fisheries, wildlife habitat, water quality and other beneficial uses”

As outcomes of the BDCP and other Bay-Delta planning processes, the Resolution calls for: protection and restoration of the Bay-Delta ecosystem; ensuring adequate Delta outflows into San Francisco Bay; reducing reliance on exports through regional self-sufficiency; protecting the economic vitality of communities throughout the Bay-Delta; full financial disclosure of plan costs and benefits; fair representation of local governments in governance structures and; flood protection.

Attachment:
Resolution 08-12