



# REPORT TO COUNCIL

## City of Sacramento

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Staff Report  
February 17, 2009

Honorable Mayor and  
Members of the City Council

**Title:** Informational Workshop on the Delta Vision Strategic Plan

**Location/Council District:** Citywide

**Recommendation:** Receive and File.

**Contacts:** Dave Brent, Engineering Services Manager, 808-1420; Dan Sherry, Special Projects Engineer, 808-1419

**Presenters:** Keith Coolidge, California Department of Water Resources  
Dave Brent, City of Sacramento

**Department:** Utilities

**Division:** Engineering Services

**Organization No:** 14001311

### Description/Analysis

**Issue:** The Delta is an important economic and environmental resource that benefits most Californians. Not only does the Delta convey or provide agricultural and municipal water supplies for two thirds of the State population, but it is also a unique ecosystem that provides crucial habitat for a variety of species. It is also a popular destination for urban, environmental and recreational use. The Delta is over stressed, with significant problems such as deteriorating levees, water supply and reliability in jeopardy, and declining native species. Through Governor Schwarzenegger's Executive Order S-17-06 in 2006, the Blue Ribbon Task Force was created to develop a vision to repair the ecological damage to the Delta, and then prepare a strategic plan which would sustain the Delta in future decades while ensuring a reliable water supply

There are numerous provisions in the Delta Vision Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) that could impact the City of Sacramento's customers, and local government's opportunity for input and direction. The Strategic Plan includes very limited opportunity for local government input at the City level, and a high potential for additional requirements for local governments in areas such as land use decisions, water conservation, stormwater management, and wastewater discharges. Plans to address problems in

the Delta should also consider the needs of the region upstream of the Delta, and be based on good science, consideration of existing efforts and economics, and stakeholder input including local government.

This informational workshop is to inform City Council on the Strategic Plan and potential impacts to the City. A question and answer session is included to respond to Council questions by City staff and invited experts and stakeholders from a range of perspectives.

**Policy Considerations:** The Strategic Plan is consistent with the City Council focus areas of public safety and sustainability and livability from some Delta and exporter perspectives. However, aspects of the Strategic Plan may impact these focus areas for the City of Sacramento if the area north of the Delta is not carefully considered by the Delta governance organizations and government agencies involved in Delta regulation and policy setting. Opportunity for local government input to Strategic Plan implementation is limited; where input is available, City staff will bring policy decisions on the Strategic Plan before the Law and Legislation Committee and City Council to obtain guidance and policy direction.

#### **Environmental Considerations:**

**California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):** The Development Services Department, Environmental Planning Services Division has reviewed this project and determined that it is exempt from the provisions of CEQA ( the California Environmental Quality Act) under Section 15061(b)(3) which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

**Sustainability Considerations:** The coequal objectives of the Strategic Plan are to create a more sustainable environment by restoring the Delta ecosystem and creating a more reliable water supply for California. The Strategic Plan is generally consistent with the City's Sustainability Master Plan in advancing the goal of conserving the use and protection of sources of water; however, implementation of the Strategic Plan could impact the City's future water supply and impose additional costs on City ratepayers.

**Committee/Commission Action:** Not applicable

**Rationale for Recommendation:** The workshop is for information only, and it is recommended that Council receive and file this report.

**Financial Considerations:** The financial impacts of implementing the Strategic Plan to the City' rate payers are unknown at this time. Significant costs to City ratepayers may be

incurred due to increased regulations, policies, and management strategies to support the Delta.

**Emerging Small Business Development (ESBD):** Not applicable

Respectfully submitted by: Shirell Hu  
for Dave Brent  
Engineering Manager

Approved by: Marty Hanneman  
Marty Hanneman  
ACM/Director of Utilities

Recommendation Approved:

M. Kerridge  
Ray Kerridge  
City Manager

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**ATTACHMENT 1****BACKGROUND**

The Delta is both unique and essential. Unique in that, at 1,300 square miles, it is the largest estuary on the west coast of North and South American. The Delta is a complex, interconnected ecosystem that is home to 55 species of fish and 750 species of plants and wildlife, as well as an agricultural and recreational center.

The Delta is essential because its rivers and the miles of natural and man-made sloughs and channels are the linchpin to how water is moved around California. Twenty-five million Californians - nearly two-thirds of the state population - depend on the Delta for at least some of their water supply. Three million agricultural acres are irrigated with water that flows through the Delta. Three highways, three railroad lines, five high voltage power lines and hundreds of gas lines crisscross the Delta region.

There is no question that the Delta is in peril. The Delta's 1,100 miles of levees are deteriorating, water supply and reliability are in jeopardy, native species are declining, and urbanization of Delta lands is increasing. Due to the Delta's declining ecosystem and unreliable water supply, there have been multiple efforts introduced to find solutions that address the problems confronting the Delta. These efforts include the Strategic Plan, the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP), the Interagency Ecological Program (IEP), and the State and Regional Water Quality Control Boards' Bay-Delta Strategic Plan. All these efforts, depending on whether they are adopted and what they ultimately require, could have significant impacts on the Sacramento Region and the City's rate payers.

Through Governor Schwarzenegger's Executive Order S-17-06 in 2006, the Blue Ribbon Task Force was created to develop a vision to repair the ecological damage to the Delta, and then prepare a strategic plan which would sustain the Delta in future decades while ensuring a reliable water supply for the two thirds of California's population who depend in whole or in part on the water from the Delta. Over the past year, the Blue Ribbon Task Force (Task Force) published six versions of the Strategic Plan for public review and comment. The City of Sacramento provided comments on the final draft document in October 2008. The Strategic Plan was completed by the Task Force in October 2008 and presented to the Delta Vision Committee (Committee) for their consideration. The Committee presented their recommendation to the Governor and Legislators on December 30, 2008.

The City's key concerns with the Strategic Plan are:

- Surface water rights – The City has senior water rights off both the American and Sacramento Rivers. California water rights law affords priority to senior water rights, to water users within areas of origin, and to water rights held for municipal use – these priorities should be respected in implementation of the Strategic Plan. In addition, any reallocation of water from existing water users, such as might occur if upstream users were required to provide a specified flow pattern or

pulse flows to benefit the Delta, should only be pursued to the extent that it is shown that the upstream water right holder's actions contribute to the Delta's problems.

- Land Use Governance – A portion of South Sacramento is within the Delta secondary zone. Local jurisdiction should remain the primary local land use planning entity within the Delta.
- Water Conservation – If an unrealistic mandatory water conservation standard is set by the State, it could cost the City several million dollars. The State should avoid “one size fits all” water conservation standards.
- Water Quality – The regulatory processes for water quality protection that result in water quality improvements should be based on good science, consideration of existing efforts and economics, and stakeholder input. Treating these discharges could cost the City rate payers hundreds of millions to billions of dollars.
- Flood Plain Management – The Delta solution should not siphon levee improvement funds from ongoing and future flood control improvements in upstream urbanized areas.
- Financing – Funding this program should be allocated in direct proportion to the benefits received (beneficiary pays). Significant costs to City ratepayers may be incurred due to implementation of the Strategic Plan. Implementation of the plan should also be considerate of the potential economic impact to low income communities located upstream of the Delta.

City staff is coordinating with or collaborating with other agencies and organizations to help gain regional support in areas that may adversely impact the City. Such organizations include the Regional Water Authority, Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District and the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA). City staff will be coming back to the Law and Legislation Committee and City Council for direction on policy decisions that could impact the City.

ATTACHMENT 2

LOCATION MAP

