

All the Fuss About Flow

The State Water Resources Control Board's recent action adopting the "Delta Flow Criteria Report" has generated a great deal of discussion, debate and media attention. The report recommends significantly higher outflows from the Delta to the Pacific Ocean, resulting in significantly reduced supplies for residents, farms and businesses north and south of the Delta. Water users have gone to great lengths to downplay the report's relevance. Environmental interests have gone to equally exhausting efforts to overemphasize its significance.

Everyone involved in the Delta understands that flows are important. More fresh water is clearly good for an estuary that has become increasingly polluted, invaded and over stressed by a growing population and a whole host of contributing factors. However, increased water flows alone won't solve the problems in the Delta. Moreover, significant additional water supply restrictions will permanently cripple the state's economy and does not represent a feasible option.

Solving the Delta crisis means we must find a way to achieve the "co-equal goals" established by

the Legislature and the Governor last year when they enacted the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009. It means finding a way to balance the needs of humans and fish alike.



Achieving the co-equal goals of environmental restoration and water supply reliability means:

- ◆ Ag and urban water users must continue to take cost effective steps to use water more efficiently;

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- ◆ State and regional water quality regulators must be willing to reduce pollution from Sacramento and other communities that discharge

large amounts of ammonium and other toxic contaminants into the Delta through wastewater and storm water discharges;

- ◆ Ending the nonsensical practice of protecting invasive predators, such as black and striped bass at the expense of protected endangered species like salmon and smelt;

- ◆ More vigorously enforcing existing water rights laws such as curtailing illegal diversions, and most importantly;

- ◆ Developing the scientific foundation necessary to ensure that any new flow requirements take into account environmental and economic considerations and achieve the desired result.

Balance will be key as the newly created Delta Stewardship Council seeks to craft a long-term Delta Plan that achieves the co-equal goals of providing a more reliable water supply for Californians and protecting, restoring and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. Simply achieving either goal at the expense of the other is not acceptable.



Delta Watch

A Project of the Coalition for a Sustainable Delta