

# **California Sportfishing Protection Alliance Advisory 8.25.07**

## **Delta Fishery Recovery and Restoration Plan Vision**

### **Summary of CSPA's –AFG's Submittal to the Blue Ribbon Task Force**

In conjunction with his signing of SB 1574 by State Senator Sheila Kuehl, Gov. Schwarzenegger issued an Executive Order in September 2006 to develop a Delta Strategic Vision process to provide a sustainable management program for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

The bill requires the Secretary of the Resources Agency to convene a committee to develop and submit to the Governor and the Legislature on or before December 31, 2008 a Strategic Vision for a Sustainable Sacramento - San Joaquin Delta that is to include, among a number of objectives, sustainable ecosystem functions for aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna and sustainable recreation uses, including current and future recreational and tourism.

This committee is to be composed of Secretary of the Resources Agency, and the Secretaries of: Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, Environmental Protection, Food & Agriculture and the President of the Public Utilities Commission. The Governor also appointed a Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) to advise the committee. And, the Resources Secretary appointed a Stakeholder Coordination Group (SCG) that is to inform and advise the BRTF. I was appointed to the SCG as the representative for CSPA to represent sportfishing interests.

The SCG is charged with developing alternative visions for a sustainable Delta and submitting those visions to the BRTF for consideration. Preliminary SCG recommendations will be presented to the BRTF on August 30 & 31.

CSPA and the Allied Fishing Groups have developed and provided Delta Fishery Recovery and Restoration Vision to the SCG and to the BRTF. I will be on a panel on Thursday the 30th to answer any question that the Task Force might have regarding our vision.

Highly summarized, the key elements of our vision includes the following:

Our vision is based on the conviction that the only way to restore the public's fisheries and sustainability to the Delta is to rectify the hydrologic and water quality impacts caused by development and export of water out of the Delta and its tributaries. Unfortunately, the conveyance alternatives being recommended by the Stakeholder Group to the Task Force lack essential information necessary to evaluate their fishery and Delta ecosystem benefits and liabilities. Without this critical information an

informed decision cannot be made.

Due to this, CSPA in concert with the Allied Fishing Groups request that the BRTF make our Delta Fishery Recovery and Restoration Vision an integral component of any alternative the Task Force recommends to the Resources Agency and the Governor to meet the mandates of SB 1574 and the Governor's Executive Order.

Our vision includes the recovery and restoration of all the species resident to the Delta and its tributaries including Sacramento winter-run and spring-run Chinook salmon, steelhead, green sturgeon and pelagic species including Delta smelt, long-fin smelt, American shad, and striped bass.

This vision is a response to the long-term declines in these fisheries and the collapse of the Delta's ecosystem productivity. It includes the fulfillment of the many promises made to the public by our government to restore our fishery resources and the Delta's aquatic ecosystem.

At the heart of our vision is the requirement that our government properly discharge their legal responsibility as the public's trustees of these fisheries and their aquatic environment. The government is obligated to ensure the protection, restoration, and management of these resources in perpetuity in accordance with a large body of law that requires natural resources be so protected because they are a renewable heritage of substantial value to the citizens of our state and nation.

An endemic problem with our State's water policy and the water contracting process used to export Delta and tributary waters must be resolved if we are to achieve the restoration of our fisheries and a sustainable Delta. For much of their history, State and Federal contracting processes have promised and delivered more water than was surplus to the needs of the area of origin beneficial uses, including fisheries and the Delta. This has significantly impacted fishery resources and their aquatic habitat. The paradigm of over subscribing, or allocating, water supplies for export is a fundamental culprit of the collapse of the Delta's ecological productivity and the decline of its fisheries.

To realize fishery restoration objectives and bring sustainability to the Delta ecosystem, the following will be needed:

The Delta requires restoration now. Exports must be reduced by several million-acre feet annually, or more, if the Delta is to make a significant ecological recovery and become sustainable.

To solve the current over subscription of the Delta's waters, any Delta Vision you recommend should establish goals for substantially increasing regional water self-sufficiency, based on the adoption of best water conservation practices and the principle that the people of our state must live within the limits of our natural resources. This should include a comprehensive statewide water program with financial incentives

for water users to significantly increase water conservation.

The Delta's aquatic environment should be managed to increase the residence time of its waters so it can once again generate an abundant, sustainable food supply, where and when it is ecologically needed. An improved hydrologic regime is necessary to meet this goal as well as the flows needed by anadromous and resident Delta fishes. To achieve these goals, any conveyance alternative that is part of the Delta Vision should include the flow regime and management proposal contained in Long Term Vision For the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta: A Work in Progress submitted by The Bay Institute, et. al. We recommend the Task Force also adopt all of the essential components recommended in this document, to help address the needs of the Delta's ecosystem and its fisheries.

A sustainable Delta ecosystem will require the use of the best available science, including a science-based flow regime for the Delta that incorporates the interrelationship between water operations and conveyance, fish populations and abundance, and ecosystem functions. Participation by independent (academic) scientists should oversee and support the work of state and federal agency scientists who manage the Inner-agency Ecological Program (IEP) and those working on the Pelagic Organism Decline. No single government agency (particularly one whose mission is exporting water) should hold veto power over science-based water management decisions.

The Delta and its tributaries require a comprehensive water quality compliance program to ensure they meet the water quality standards established by the federal Clean Water Act, the state's Porter-Cologne Act and the Water Quality Control Plan. Hundreds of miles of the Delta's waterways are not in compliance with these requirements. The result is significant, long-term impacts to the Delta's aquatic environment and the productivity of its foodweb. The toxicity of these waters has been identified by the IEP as one of the primary factors involved in the Pelagic Organism Decline.

A comprehensive solution is needed to address predation and entrainment losses at the state and federal Delta pumping plants.

A comprehensive program that prevents the introduction of all undesirable non-native aquatic species needs to be put to work immediately and enforced. This program should minimize or eliminate the impact of the current undesirable exotic species on the Delta's ecosystem.

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A copy of our complete recommendations are attached for those who would like to get into greater specificity. Should you have questions or issues. Please let me know.

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