

SOLANO COUNTY WATER AGENCY



Solano County Water Agency Delta Policy

Approved by Board of Directors on December 13, 2007

Summary of Policy Position

- State support for funding of an alternate intake to the North Bay Aqueduct is needed to mitigate the impacts for Delta Solutions.
- Any changes in the Cache Slough complex to improve fishery habitat needs to provide protection for existing agricultural water diversions.
- Support consideration of all water conveyance options including through Delta options and alternatives that could include an isolated facility as part of a comprehensive solution that adequately addresses Solano issues.
- Support consideration of more water storage for operational flexibility and for protection of the Delta as part of a comprehensive solution.
- The impacts of changes in salinity to the Suisun Marsh and Delta agriculture need to be fully mitigated.
- Delta levees need adequate funding for capital improvements, ongoing maintenance and emergency response. Beneficiaries of the Delta must contribute to funding.
- Mitigate impacts of conversion of agricultural land to habitat through means such as monetary contributions and agricultural preservation programs.
- Provide for a sustainable Delta. Fully mitigate impacts of changes to the Delta.
- Consider the importance of transportation and utility corridors through the Delta and provide enhancements and protections.
- Governance structure must provide adequate guarantees that the protections will be provided. Local Delta government must be a prominent part of the governance structure.
- Cost allocation to be based on beneficiaries pays.

Introduction

Solano County borders on the Delta and the Bay. We have a strong interest in the future of the Delta currently being discussed in many forums. Our interests are wide and varied and include: water supply, flood control, impacts to the local agricultural economy, transportation, environmental protection and recreation.

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There are several programs studying various solutions to Delta problems including, Delta Vision, Bay Delta Conservation Plan and Delta Risk Management Study, in addition to legislative and initiative efforts. For the sake of brevity in this paper we will refer to those programs as “Delta Solutions”.

The governing Board of the Solano County Water Agency (SCWA) is made up of all five members of the Solano County Board of Supervisors, mayors of all seven cities (Benicia, Fairfield, Dixon, Rio Vista, Suisun City, Vacaville and Vallejo) in the County and directors from three districts that provide agricultural water supply (Solano Irrigation District, Maine Prairie Water District and Reclamation District No. 2068).

Water Supply

The SCWA obtains about half of its urban water supply from the North Bay Aqueduct (NBA) which pumps out of the north Delta at Barker Slough. The NBA is part of the State Water Project and serves over 400,000 people in Solano and Napa counties. Barker Slough is part of the Cache Slough complex that is seasonally home to the endangered Delta Smelt and other aquatic species. Additionally, the NBA has been documented as having the worst drinking water quality for all the State Water Project due to high organic carbon and turbidity.

SCWA has been investigating the development of an alternate intake to the NBA. SCWA received CALFED grant funding that completed a feasibility study for a 15 mile underground pipeline and a new pumping station on the Sacramento River near Courtland. SCWA has requested the California Department of Water Resources to start on the permitting and design of the alternate intake. Costs were estimated at \$150 million in 2003 dollars.

Delta Solutions identify the Cache Slough complex as being a key area for habitat restoration for the benefit of Delta smelt and other Delta species. Included is the development of wetlands to produce organic carbon to supplement the aquatic food chain. These future Delta actions have a direct adverse impact on the NBA by increasing the number of endangered fish near the NBA pumps. Additionally, the habitat restoration intentionally result in increases of organic carbon production near the NBA pumps that results, through the water treatment process, in increasing potential carcinogen levels in the drinking water supply.

Delta Solutions that include changes to the Cache Slough complex must mitigate its impact to the NBA. We are therefore requesting partial state funding of the construction of the alternate intake to the NBA.

In addition to the NBA pumps there are several agricultural water supply intakes in the Cache Slough area. These intakes would also suffer with the creation of new Delta smelt habitat. Any changes in the Cache Slough complex to improve fishery habitat needs to provide protection for existing agricultural water diversions. These protections should

include take authority for endangered species and protection from prosecution for any fishery impacts above a baseline level.

Delta Solutions will likely recommend a new method of the conveyance of water supply through or around the Delta. An isolated facility may be considered. SCWA supports consideration of all options including through Delta options and alternatives that could include an isolated facility. However, such support is conditioned upon a Delta Solution that adequately addresses all the issues in this paper.

SCWA also sees the need for more water storage for operational flexibility and for protection of the Delta. Both groundwater and surface water storage should be considered. We are concerned about the high cost of surface water storage and want to ensure that costs are paid by the beneficiaries from such projects.

Water Quality

Concerns about water quality impacts to the NBA from Delta Solutions were discussed previously under the Water Supply section.

We also have an overall concern about potential future salinity intrusions into the Delta. Some of the Delta Solution options being considered include allowing a greater variability of salinity in the Delta for ecological reasons. This change in salinity regime could have an adverse impact on Suisun Marsh and Delta agricultural diverters. Any changes in salinity need to recognize the impacts of these changes and fully mitigate them.

Delta Levees

Delta Solutions need to address the long-term sustainability of Delta levees. It is envisioned that significant capital improvements need to be made to strengthen Delta levees to withstand threats such as earthquakes and rising sea level. Given numerous other beneficiaries of the Delta it is unfair to put the costs of all levee improvements on districts and agencies in the Delta. Other beneficiaries of the Delta must contribute towards long-term Delta levee needs including funding ongoing maintenance.

SCWA supports efforts to address the need for quick response in the Delta in the event of an emergency from Delta levee failures such as from an earthquake. Materials and other resources should be stockpiled and a plan of action developed. These plans must also consider the impact on local populations and Delta agriculture in responding to emergencies. Beneficiaries of the Delta need to participate in the funding of these efforts.

Land Use

Delta Solutions identify significant areas in Solano County for habitat development. Some of the land identified is currently in active agriculture. Conversions of this scale will have a major impact on the economy of Solano County. Delta Solutions must

mitigate this impact through means such as monetary payments and agricultural preservation programs.

SCWA also has concerns about discussions of a new Delta agency usurping land use control from local government.

Sustainable Delta

SCWA supports a comprehensive Delta Solution that is sustainable. The Delta supports a wide range of values including the ecosystem, recreation, utility/transportation corridors, agriculture and tourism. The overall solution must address climate change and sea level rise. We recognize that the Delta Solution could result in major changes in the Delta, some of which could adversely affect Solano County interests. All these potential actions need to be analyzed for potential adverse impacts and be fully mitigated. SCWA supports comprehensive long-term plans such as the Bay Delta Conservation Plan currently being developed.

Water Conservation/Demand Management

Delta Solutions need to include recognition that water conservation and demand management is an integral part of overall water supply planning. SCWA supports a broad range of programs including water conservation, water recycling and desalination. These types of programs can be costly so feasibility of implementation needs to be considered. Protocols like the exemption process used by the California Urban Water Conservation Council should be considered.

Transportation Corridors

Delta Solutions must consider the importance of transportation corridors through the Delta. The Highway 12 corridor is especially of interest to Solano County.

Governance

Delta Solutions may identify the need for a new governance structure for the Delta. Any new governance structure needs to have local Delta government representation. We understand that given current State and Federal laws there will be limitations on the authorities of a new governance structure. Any new governance structure must provide adequate guarantees that the protections included in Delta Solutions will be provided.

Beneficiary Pays

Delta Solutions will have a substantial cost for implementation. The underlying principle should be beneficiary pays. Of course, the challenge is identifying the beneficiaries and allocating costs. It is appropriate for the State (through general funds likely developed by bond measures) to pay for some measures such as environmental benefits and recreation. It is also appropriate for the State and other benefitting agencies to pay for mitigation of

impacts of Delta Solutions where the impacts are not specifically associated with a particular component. Stakeholders including those in Solano County must directly participate in discussions regarding allocation of costs and identification of beneficiaries.

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