DEC 0 6 2005

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South Delta
IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM
EIS/EIR

Public Information Meeting Comment Card

PLEASE PRINT

Date: 12/6/05

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See Attached

Please submit your comments to a project representative or fold this form in half, seal with tape and mail to Paul Marshall, 1416 Ninth Street, Room 215-30, Sacramento, CA 95814. **Comments must be received by February 7, 2006.**

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Statement of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) In Support of the South Delta Improvements Program

Presented December 6, 2005, by Steve Hall, Executive Director

Introduction

The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) is a statewide organization whose members include 440 public water agencies. As the local agencies responsible for delivering water to communities, farms and businesses throughout the state, ACWA members have a unique perspective on our state's changing water needs and a keen interest in addressing them.

Earlier this year, ACWA released a comprehensive water policy document that laid out 12 recommendations for ensuring California has the water supply system it will need to meet its diverse needs in the coming decades. The document, titled "No Time to Waste: A Blueprint for California Water," was developed over the course of a year by a statewide task force and reflects the on-the-ground experiences and insight of individuals who are on the front lines of meeting Californians' water needs.

ACWA's Blueprint was submitted to the Schwarzenegger Administration in May and has been widely distributed to state and federal lawmakers, policy makers and other state and local officials.

Delta Improvements Needed

Some of the most urgent recommendations in ACWA's Blueprint concern the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, a critical link in California's water supply system and one of the most important ecosystems on the West Coast.

It is increasingly clear that the Delta is not sustainable long-term as an ecosystem or as a water conveyance system. Improvements are badly needed to increase the flexibility of the existing system and to enhance water supply, water quality, levee stability and environmental protection. ACWA's blueprint report addresses that by calling for a comprehensive examination of the Delta at the highest levels of state government. We believe that such an effort will inevitably lead to a reconfiguration of the existing Delta in order to make it sustainable.

However, in the near term ACWA believes the actions proposed as part of the South Delta Improvements Program will provide needed flexibility in the existing system and mark a major step toward securing a more reliable supply of high-quality water for California's future.

The South Delta Improvements Program, as proposed by the California Department of Water Resources, is a responsible step toward accomplishing that goal. The SDIP includes a combination of actions to make the existing system work more efficiently with

the promise of improving water quality, water supply reliability and environmental protection in the near term.

The SDIP is one of the most important elements of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, a comprehensive effort long supported by ACWA members to resolve water supply reliability and ecosystem problems in the Bay-Delta. The August 2000 CALFED Record of Decision called for a coordinated set of actions such as those in the SDIP to improve water supply, water quality, levee stability and ecosystem restoration. In short, the SDIP is the next step toward better managing the Delta to meet the needs of water users and key species.

ACWA supports full implementation of the SDIP because it offers multiple benefits to Californians. Specifically, the SDIP:

- Provides a powerful tool for improving Delta operations by adding the flexibility to shift Delta pumping from fish-sensitive, drier periods to times when it is more environmentally sound.

- Is an important first step in the Delta Improvements Program (DIP), which will provide for significant improvements in water quality, both for drinking water purposes and other in-Delta uses. We urge the Department to move quickly to implement the features of the DIP that will provide water quality benefits and we remind the Department that federal law requires those features in order to achieve the full benefits of the actions envisioned in the CALFED Record of Decision

- Provides substantial new protections for anadromous species such as salmon and other in-Delta species by installing seasonal gates to enhance water quality and circulation.

- Improves conditions for some in-Delta water users and takes important first steps to improve water quality upstream in the San Joaquin River.

ACWA urges the Department of Water Resources to move forward with the entire SDIP package, including the proposed increase in permitted pumping capacity at the State Water Project's South Delta facilities. Only by implementing the entire suite of tools envisioned in the SDIP can the program meet its full potential to improve water quality and water supply reliability and reduce conflicts in the Delta. ACWA also urges the Department to proceed with the DIP, so that the water quality as well as water supply benefits can be realized.

ACWA members believe it is imperative that we have a more flexible water delivery system so that we can continue to accommodate growth in our population and economy while relying on existing water supplies. We must take a responsible, balanced approach to addressing our water resource needs that considers all of California's diverse, often competing, interests. The SDIP is a key element in such a balanced approach.

Long-Term Approach Also Needed

As the SDIP and DIP move forward, we urge the Schwarzenegger Administration to move forward with that approach by appointing a high-level commission to evaluate the Delta's long-term vulnerability and recommend actions to reduce risks to the state's water supply and the environment.

It is only through this combination of short-term actions, in conjunction with a long-term plan, can we make the Delta, the heart of California's water system, viable and sustainable for the future.