



ACTION PLAN 2014

INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Water Caucus is a group of more than 30 grassroots environmental organizations advocating for sustainable and cost effective water policies for all Californians, with a special focus on the Bay Delta. For the last few years the Caucus and its member organizations have been heavily involved in the Delta Plan, the BDCP process, and State Water Resources Control Board hearings and related activities, and has responded to the various agency plans in keeping with our stated policies ¹.

BACKGROUND

Based on our policy documents, our recommendations during 2013 to the various state and federal agencies controlling California water have included the following actions:

1. In order to recover the health of the Bay-Delta ecosystems and its fisheries, scientifically developed criteria that would allow increased flows through the Delta need to be established, as indicated by the State Water Board. The health of the Delta is one of the co-equal goals required by law.
2. Water exports from the Delta need to be decreased, and the current federal and state water contract levels must be reduced in keeping with a safe, healthy, and reliable water supply. That's the other co-equal goal.
3. In order to compensate for reduced exports from the Delta, the state must sponsor a longer-term, more aggressive water efficiency program state wide that would apply to both urban and agricultural users.

¹ Environmental Water Caucus. California Water Solutions Now. 2011

- The favorable economics of water efficiencies and water recycling have been proven and would be billions of dollars less expensive for rate payers than constructing a new version of the Peripheral Canal or major new surface storage dams.
4. In order to further reduce the export pressures and reliance on the Delta – one of the key objectives of the Delta Reform Act – thousands of acres of impaired and pollution generating farmlands south of the Delta need to be retired from irrigation and turned into more sustainable and profitable uses, such as solar energy generation, as an example.
 5. Delta levees need to be improved beyond the current Corps of Engineer standards in order to address potential earthquake, flooding, and future sea level rise concerns.
 - The reinforcement of core levees beyond current standards is estimated by the Delta Protection Commission to cost between \$2 to \$4 billion and is orders-of-magnitude less expensive than major conveyance projects that are currently being contemplated by BDCP for those same purposes.
 6. The Delta ecosystems and wildlife cannot be restored without major reductions of pollutants that are currently being poured into the Delta or without a significant program of habitat improvements for the Delta.
 7. Fish screens at the south Delta pumps must be improved to reduce the current salvage of marine life.
 8. We have seen no indications that the Delta Plan – or BDCP – will seriously consider and balance Public Trust values – one of the foundations of our state water management policy – as it looks at competing alternatives.

During the last two years, while we worked with the Delta Stewardship Council, we developed two new publications to guide our current and future work. They are:

1. The EWC Responsible Exports Plan,² and
2. Our Strategic and Operating Plan

What follows is the EWC Action Plan for 2014 that has resulted from the development of these two guiding documents. All of the listed EWC organizations have agreed to be guided by these recommended actions.

² Environmental Water Caucus. Responsible Exports Plan. 2013

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- 1. We will continue to promote the various actions described in our Responsible Exports Plan (RX Plan), which currently are described in our web site, and which are clear alternatives to the presently proposed BDCP. Our Responsible Exports Plan has the following advantages over any other plan that has been produced for the Bay Delta. Its main features are:**
 - The lowest level of exports and highest level of outflows in order to improve habitat, contribute to recovery of fisheries, and significantly improve water quality;
 - The least costly alternative since it does not require costly tunnels;
 - The only alternative that modernizes the Delta with improved fish screens at the South Delta and reinforced levees in the Delta (above the PL84-99 standard as recommended by the Delta Protection Commission) to protect from earthquake, sea level rise, and flood threats, and provide increased security for water supply reliability;
 - A significant reduction in the use of impaired farmlands south of the Delta;
 - Provides the highest degree of local and regional self-sufficiency with a plan that is more aggressive than the current 20/20 plan;
 - Places emphasis on increased groundwater storage south of the Delta and protections for Sacramento Valley groundwater basins.
 - Continues a robust food supply for California;
 - Provides the highest level of permanent job creation.
- 2. Working with Caucus organizations, we will produced formal documented comments related to the Bay Delta Conservation Plan and associated EIS/EIR that are in line with the RX Plan and that recommend alternatives to the BDCP tunnels and the BDCP restoration actions, which are referred to as “Conservation Measures 1 through 19” in the BDCP plan.**
- 3. Working with Caucus members, we will produce and coordinate EWC written responses to the SWRCB review of Delta flows and the SWRCB implementation plan which will increase Delta outflows and improve water quality. Our advocacy will be in line with the EWC Responsible Exports Plan.**
- 4. We will continue to produce joint EWC/EJCW responses as necessary in support of the Winnemen Wintu Tribe’s opposition to potential federal plans to raise Shasta Dam.**
- 5. We will advocate for satisfactory features to be included and negative features are eliminated in any Water Bond legislation, CEQA modifications, or similar legislative actions during 2014.**

- 6. We will continue to support and participate in EWC organizations' actions that oppose the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, particularly actions being promoted by Restore the Delta and Food and Water Watch.**
- 7. We will oppose any plans for the construction of Sites Reservoir and Temperance Flat Dam because of their harmful effects on ecosystems and questionable benefit-cost analysis, and instead support the recharge of previous groundwater basins.**
- 8. Working with EWC organizations, we will continue advocacy of our Responsible Exports Plan and its features through personal appearances, presentations, written statements, and media releases.**

This Action Plan 2014 that we propose will provide many benefits, in addition to the environmental improvements. Compared with current state and federal plans, these actions will reduce the financial burden on taxpayers and ratepayers, reduce impacts on the state budget, provide for greater ratepayer equity by reducing subsidies for water and require all businesses, especially agriculture, to pay for the true cost of the public resources they utilize. In addition, the proposed actions will bring state and federal agencies into compliance with environmental laws that they now routinely violate; they will force hard questions and hard decisions. In the end, these actions will promote a positive, higher-quality legacy for our children and grandchildren while providing for a thriving economic future for Californians.

Further details in support of the EWC Action Plan 2014 can be found at our web site: www.ewccalifornia.org