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Delta “Vision” for Water Conveyance Protects Valley Water Supplies
Panel Recommendations Aimed at Protecting Water Supplies, Delta Ecosystem

The Livermore-Amador Valley’s Zone 7 Water Agency is pleased that a state advisory panel endorses analysis of new conveyance options for water supplies now sent through the ecologically fragile Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Zone 7, the water wholesaler for Livermore, Pleasanton, Dublin and Dougherty Valley, gets about 80 percent of its water supplies conveyed through the Delta in a typical rainfall year.

In light of ecological pressures on the Delta, “Zone 7 is urging water customers in its service area to do their part by cutting back on water use where feasible,” Zone 7 General Manager Jill Duerig said. “However, conservation measures alone will not provide for adequate, long-term reliability of existing water supplies. Water reliability requires a secure State Water Project system as well as maximizing regional self-sufficiency.”

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force issued a final report Tuesday that recommends several actions aimed at protecting both the Delta ecosystem and the state’s water supply.

Among other things, it calls for analysis of a new “dual conveyance” system for delivery of State Water Project water from the Sierra that combines in-Delta conveyance

improvements with a second conveyance facility that is physically separate from the Delta itself, at least in some environmentally sensitive locations. Such a bypass could eliminate fish kills at Delta pumps and protect water supplies from potential levee damage in the event of an earthquake.

Long-term fixes to the Delta have a new urgency in light of a federal judge's order in August, finalized last week, that reduces Delta pumping and deliveries in 2008 while state and federal agencies complete a long-term plan to protect endangered Delta smelt.

If a dry winter significantly reduces allocations from the State Water Project, the court ruling has a nominal impact on total supplies available and Zone 7 will rely on its drought reserves to meet Valley water demand. However, should court-ordered pumping restrictions extend into a wet 2009, water supplies available to replenish drought reserves would be impacted. In either case, conservation is a prudent, necessary step to ensuring long-term health of the region's water supply.

"The court-ruling exposes the limitations of existing Delta water conveyance infrastructure in providing adequate long-term water supply reliability," Duerig said.