

Bay Delta Plan - A Call to Awareness and Action

Jack Duran, District 1 Supervisor and Gray Allen, District 1 Representative, Placer County Water Agency (PCWA)

Water is life. And for much of California, that life-sustaining substance comes from somewhere else. Most of the state's population is in Southern California and most of the water is in Northern California. Let me put it another way: most of the state's voters are in the south while most of the state's water is in the north.

There is a water plan called the Bay Delta Conservation Plan that is winding its way through the environmental review process. The Plan is being touted as *salvation* for the damaged Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta ecosystem and a way to secure California water supplies. While trying to repair the Delta sounds altruistic, the problem with the second half of that equation is that most of those secured supplies will be going to Southern California from us here in the North.

The question probably arises: Why should you, residents of Placer County, care about the Bay Delta Plan?

You should care because the Bay Delta Conservation Plan has a very real potential to take enough water from Northern California to cause us regular water shortages and to do even more damage to the environment.

The south state's environmental destruction in the pursuit of enough water to irrigate what is essentially a desert has been going on for more than a century. The first blow to the environment came with the Los Angeles Aqueduct in 1908. That system ended up draining Mono Lake and the Owens Valley. It took decades and millions of dollars in legal fees and protracted court cases before that practice was stopped and repair could begin.

Central to the Bay Delta Plan is the construction of tunnels to move water around the Delta and down south before the water even gets to the Delta, in an effort to "push back" an anticipated 17 inch rise in sea level. We are getting assurances that during dry years the water needs of the Delta will come before Southern California demands. But what about the present and future needs of us here in Northern California?

There are three components to the water picture in the State, Storage, Regulations and Climate change. While California's population approaches 40 million residents, there are no immediate or long range plans to build additional water storage. The last storage project being the Oroville Dam project in the late 1960's. Second, about 40 percent of the water that passes through the Delta is dedicated to the environment via state regulations; it can't be used elsewhere. Finally, climate change predictions indicate that as sea levels rise, salt water will intrude farther into the Delta, requiring additional water to flush the Delta system. That will make even less water available to everyone: water exporters, environmental programs and Northern California water users.

While the Bay Delta Plan is under environmental review, we need to better understand how all of its components will affect both Southern California and Northern California water users. There are

numerous worst case scenarios for Northern California: emptying reservoirs, sucking rivers, streams and groundwater aquifers dry and a host of other water calamities.

I hope we can raise the awareness of District residents on this issue, in addition to other Northern Californians. We all need to pay attention, participate in discussions and question policies and promises that don't sound right. Regularly check the Bay Delta Plan's website:

<http://baydeltaconservationplan.com>. Sign up for their e-mails and stay informed. When there are hearings and meetings on the plan, attend and make your voices heard. Contact your elected officials and let them know what you think about the plan and its many parts.

We will also be holding information and listening meetings, in both the incorporated (City) and unincorporated part of the district, to keep you informed and answer questions and receive your input. As soon as these meetings are scheduled, we will publish the date and time.

As always, it is an honor and a privilege to serve you. I always welcome your feedback and can be reached by e-mail at jduran@placer.ca.gov or by phone at 916-787-8950. Director Gray Allen's info is glallen@surewest.net or by phone at 916-783-4334.