

Developing a Sustainable Delta Solution *August 19, 2015*

The original planning principles for the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) included principle #2¹: “**Divert more water in the wetter periods and less in the drier periods.**”

However, the current California WaterFix preferred alternative² takes more water during drier months (when Delta outflows are lowest) and is unable to increase exports above existing levels in wetter months (no new storage).

DWR and Reclamation must stop the current rush to failure and develop new alternatives using the following fundamental approach:

- Establish **realistic baseline conditions** against which the availability of surplus Delta flow for export can be determined. This will require increasing minimum flow requirements during drier periods (e.g., enhanced Fall X2 requirements) and increasing spring outflows to restore and sustain fish populations.
- Reduce direct diversions from south Delta to eliminate effects of reverse flows on fish
- Capture more water (new water) when it is plentiful – this requires **new storage** in, near and south of the Delta
- Developing new water supplies during wetter months will make it easier to meet increased flow requirements for fish, and improve water quality in the Delta – as required by 2009 Delta Reform Act
- This will represent a **reduction in reliance on the Delta for water**, i.e., the current need to export as much water as possible during drier periods.
- **Strengthen Delta levees** to support the Delta as a place and allow continued but reduced use of the south Delta export intakes – protects water supply reliability in the event of an earthquake
- **Reduce demand** on the Delta, and its tributaries, through water use efficient actions and development of local water supplies
- **Achieve** (rather than attempt to balance, or merely advance) both co-equal goals (consistent with the 2009 Delta Reform Act)
- Need iron clad non-ambiguous assurances that senior water rights and Delta beneficial uses will be protected

¹ BDCP March 2009 “An Overview and Update”

² Three new 3,000 cfs intakes in the north Delta and twin tunnels under the Delta (Alternative 4A)

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Any proposal to “fix” the Delta must include new storage and demand reduction actions to create “**new**” **water**. It must also include increased minimum flow requirements to restore and sustain the Delta ecosystem.

If increased flow requirements like those suggested by the State Water Resources Control Board (2010 Delta Flow Criteria Report) were adopted, the proposed Cal. Water Fix intakes in the north Delta could only be used under high flow conditions. This would likely **render the \$15 billion twin tunnel project (with no new storage) obsolete**, or severely limit its use.

If the new north Delta intakes could only be used under higher flow conditions, some, if not all, of the new intakes could be located instead in the western Delta. Water quality at the **western Delta intakes** (e.g., in the vicinity of Sherman Island) would be good under these high flow conditions. Western Delta intakes which would also provide a **physically-based assurance** that water could only be exported when it was surplus to the needs of the Delta, i.e., built in protection of Delta and upstream water rights and beneficial uses.

The newly branded “WaterFix” would fail to achieve either of the co-equal goals and instead represents a “fix” for water contractors that are desperate to increase their water supply from the Delta. **It is time to develop a “cure”** for this dependency, and not merely try to deal with the “symptoms.”