The Sacramento / San Joaquin River Delta

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Delta Watermaster
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The Water Education Foundation’s Delta Tour
Disclaimer

- I am not speaking for the:
  - State Water Resources Control Board or
  - The Delta Stewardship Council

- I am not presenting State policy

- I am expressing personal observations and opinions
  (except where specifically referenced to published materials).
Overview

• Role of the Delta Watermaster
• Water Rights and Water Allocation
• Managing for Drought, Flood and Climate Change
• Planning in the Bureaucratic Labyrinth
• What to Watch For
Role of the Delta Watermaster

- Independent Officer of the State
- Created as part of 2009 Delta Reform Act
- Four-year Term
- Reports jointly to Water Board and Delta Stewardship Council
Water Rights and Water Allocation in the Delta

- Appropriation System Overlain on Riparian System
  - Appropriation by Priority: “First in Time, First in Right”
  - Riparian by Correlative Curtailment: “Shared Sacrifice”
- Most Senior Delta Water Rights “Pre-date” Administrative System
- Curtailment: “Whack-a-Mole”
Response: Division of Water Rights Issued Informational Order

- Short-term:
  - Report Recent and Projected Water Use
  - Informed Regular Updates to Water Supply Availability Analyses ("Supply/Demand Curves")
Demand includes Legal Delta demand in proportion to the Sacramento River’s contribution to the combined Sacramento/San Joaquin 90% FNF inflow to the Delta. The distribution of the Delta water right demand based on proportional inflows from stream systems is only for this curtailment analysis, and does not represent a legal or policy position of the State Water Board.

Daily Full Natural Flow (FNF) from CDEC Stations BND, ORO, YRS, and FOL, current through 4/26/2015.

Monthly Adjusted FNF Forecast points include DWR’s April 2015 FNF Forecasts for BND, ORO, YRS, and FOL, and estimated FNF of minor streams for the 90% and 99% exceedance levels. Minor stream FNFs were obtained from DWR’s May 2007 Unimpaired Flow Data report, Tables UF 1 through UF 5, UF 7, and UF 10. Water year 1977 was used to reflect similarities in snowpack conditions.

Monthly 50-Year Average FNF points based on data years 1961-2010.
Response: Division of Water Rights Issued Informational Order

- Longer-term:
  - Provide Documentation Supporting the Senior Water Right Claim
  - Very High Compliance Rate (although quality of responses varied widely)
  - Avalanche of Material without Organizational Structure
  - Two-year Process of Organization, Review and Analysis
First Comprehensive Taxonomy of Senior Water Right Use in the Watershed

- Anticipates “Crowd Correction”
- Cracks Open “Black Box” of Delta Claims
- Fills Gaps in Understanding Water Diversion and Use
Managing Complexity Under the Delta Reform Act

• “Co-equal Goals”

• Three Issues:
  1. Water Supply Reliability
  2. Ecosystem Renewal
  3. Regard for Delta as an Evolving Place

• We Can All Agree on the Appropriate Balance, Right?
Delta Plan – Thread the Needle

Challenges:

- Natural
- Economic
- Infrastructure
- Cultural
- Ecological
- Vision
The Delta Plan

- Currently Suspended – Procedural Attack (Of course!)
- Undergoing Major Revision:
  - Levee Investment Strategy
  - Storage, Conveyance and Operation of Both
  - Ecosystem Renewal
- Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee
What to Watch For

• Water Quality Control Plan Update (Can we set minimum flows?)
• WaterFix (Credible operating conditions?)
• EcoRestore (Practical, actionable, affordable, scalable or utopian?)
• Delta Plan Revisions (Can we escape the ESA single-species straightjacket?)
• Arrival of the Black Swan (Can a mature democracy manage change?)
Questions ◊ Thank You

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