
Office of the Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, "Press Release: Gov. Schwarzenegger Directs Immediate Actions to Improve the Deteriorating Delta, California's Water Supply" (July 17, 2007)



Office of the Governor

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
THE PEOPLE'S GOVERNOR

PRESS RELEASE

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Gov. Schwarzenegger Directs Immediate Actions to Improve the Deteriorating Delta, California's Water Supply

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger today directed the Department of Water Resources to take immediate action steps to improve conditions in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, to help restore its natural habitat and protect the Delta smelt and other species. The Governor also identified more than \$120 million in specific Delta restoration projects to be part of his comprehensive water plan, which he is calling on the Legislature to pass by the end of this year. He made the announcements on Twitchell Island in the Delta.

"Today, I am calling for actions to help restore the Delta, the largest estuary on the West Coast and home to hundreds of native plant and animal species. The Delta is also one of the most vulnerable areas of our state. It faces dangers of contamination from a natural disaster or rising sea levels. And, we saw an example of its vulnerability when we had to shut off the pumps for nine days to protect the threatened Delta smelt," said Governor Schwarzenegger.

"The Delta is one of California's most important resources -- 25 million Californians rely on it for clean water. It also irrigates hundreds of thousands of acres of Central Valley farmland and is the heart of our \$32 billion agricultural industry."

Without immediate changes, the Delta will fail as a reliable water source, according to state water experts. Climate models and current weather patterns require that we prepare for more severe floods, droughts and rising sea levels, which the Delta must be able to withstand to protect California's water supply.

Building on his Strategic Growth Plan from last year, the Governor introduced a \$5.9 billion comprehensive water plan in January. The Governor's plan invests \$4.5 billion to develop additional surface and groundwater storage. The plan also includes \$1 billion toward restoration of the Delta, including development of a new conveyance system, \$250 million to support restoration projects on the Klamath, San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers and the Salton Sea project and \$200 million for grants to California communities to help conserve water for about 400,000 families.

Today, the Governor issued immediate directives to protect the Delta. Using existing resources, the Department of Water Resources will implement these actions:

- Prevent the spread of invasive species. Invasive species like the quagga mussel compete with native species like the smelt.
- Improve research on the Delta Smelt. State and federal agencies will upgrade and continue operation of a smelt culture laboratory.
- Screen Delta agricultural intakes to protect smelt. The state will install fish screens to protect the smelt when water is diverted from the Delta to irrigate state-owned lands on Sherman and Twitchell Islands.
- Restore the North Delta's natural habitat. The state will restore tidal wetlands and aquatic habitats at Cache Slough to provide spawning areas and promote the production of organisms that the smelt and other native fish eat. Dutch Slough is also a candidate for longer-term restoration.
- Improve Central Delta water flow patterns. The state will study and, if feasible, modify water circulation in the Central Delta near Frank's Tract to protect fish and improve water quality.
- Improve our ability to respond to Delta emergencies. The state will enhance Delta emergency response and levee failure plans and stockpile materials to repair damaged levees.

The Governor also called for additional actions to be included as part of a comprehensive water package, negotiated after the budget is passed. Totalling at more than \$120 million, these actions could be funded out of the \$1 billion proposed in the Governor's comprehensive plan, or by other funding sources:

- Restoring additional Delta habitats such as Dutch Slough. (\$48 million)
- Helping local water agencies take actions to conserve and manage limited water supplies.
- Improving emergency planning in the event of an earthquake or flood. (\$74 million)
- Assessing the feasibility of additional screening at state facilities to protect Delta smelt and expediting projects to modify water circulation and improve water quality. (\$2.25 million)
- Funding subsidence and carbon sequestration projects on Sherman and Twichell Islands and other Delta locations. (\$3.5 million)

The actions are not intended to replace recommendations from ongoing Delta planning efforts. Instead, they are to make incremental improvements until long-term plans are in place. They will be compatible with any long-term Delta plan and will not preclude future restoration options.

The Governor has directed the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force to develop a Delta management plan. The task force will present its findings and recommendations by January 1, 2008 and its Strategic Plan by October 31, 2008. The Bay Delta Conservation Plan is also underway, being developed with broad participation from water agencies, environmental organizations and local representatives. The \$1 billion proposed in the Governor's comprehensive plan will be used to fund their recommendations.