

THE DELTA WETLANDS PROJECT



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PPIC STUDY RECOMMENDS CONSIDERATION OF ADDITIONAL SURFACE WATER STORAGE IN DELTA

In-Delta Storage Project Compatible & Complementary With Findings

Sacramento, CA – Noting “there is a dire need to develop new and innovative management policies to sustain the Delta”, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) today released a much needed and anticipated comprehensive study of the San Francisco/Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta (Delta), the largest estuary on the West Coast and the source of drinking water for more than 25 million Californians. Concurrently, state leaders, including Governor Schwarzenegger, are pursuing legislative opportunities (SB 59 - Cogdill) to expand surface water storage in California, a critical element of any statewide water management plan.

The PPIC study assessed current challenges facing the Delta – its ecosystem, water supply reliability, water quality, existing land use, etc – and also identified potential options that state leaders should explore this year in implementing a long-term solution for preserving the Delta. One of the alternatives identified, “Opportunistic Delta”, calls for the consideration of additional surface water storage projects in or near the Delta. (*PPIC Research Brief: Dealing with the Delta: Envisioning Futures, Finding Solutions; page 4*).

The Delta Wetlands Project, or “In-Delta Storage”, is one of five surface storage projects currently being studied by the California Bay-Delta Authority and the California Department of Water Resources. It is a new and innovative project that combines off-stream water storage with 56 miles of levee improvements and habitat improvements on 9,000 acres in the heart of the Delta. State agencies have already concluded that the project is technically feasible and will provide significant statewide water supply, water quality, environmental and levee stability benefits. Legislation this year, introduced by Governor Schwarzenegger, Senator Cogdill and Assemblymember Villines, calls for construction of additional surface water storage projects in California and seeks authorization of statewide bonds to provide funding.

“As state leaders consider options for expanding surface water storage projects in California, we are pleased the recent PPIC study recommends consideration of additional projects in or near the Delta,” said Anson Moran, general manager for the In-Delta Storage Project.

“In-Delta Storage is the most thoroughly examined, understood and permitted of the five potential water storage projects under contemplation by the state,” added Moran. “The project, which boasts levee improvements and significant environmental benefits through habitat restoration, offers the Schwarzenegger Administration and Legislature a real option today to start seriously planning for our future water supply and security in a way that contributes to the long-term sustainability of the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta.”

Located in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and straddling San Joaquin and Contra Costa counties, the project involves four Delta islands. After years of farming and subsidence, the islands' land elevations are now below sea level. By fortifying the surrounding levee systems, the project will be able to store significant amounts of water on two of the islands, forming a greatly needed new surface water storage facility. The reservoir islands will be able to capture water when it is available (typically during storms or other events that produce large flows through the Delta), for later use when water is scarce. Nine thousand acres on the two remaining islands will be set aside permanently as wetland and wildlife habitat, forming a mosaic of seasonal and permanent wetlands, riparian woodland zones, ponds and lakes, and open grassland areas. The habitat islands will provide extremely valuable wetland and wildlife benefits to the Delta, supporting a wide variety of species, including listed and endangered plants and animals and migratory waterfowl.

For more information on In-Delta Storage, please visit its web site at www.deltawetlands.com.

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