

Stockton fiddles while the Delta burns

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The City of Stockton has grabbed lots of headlines on the way towards becoming the largest city in the nation to file for bankruptcy. But, as the [Stockton Record](#) recently pointed out, the city is on the verge of another looming catastrophe: the adverse environmental and human health consequences of its aging and decrepit sewage system.



other Delta advocates are expending all their energy attempting to undermine the Bay Delta Conservation Planning process, an effort led by the State of California intended to improve water supply reliability and contribute to the conservation of the Delta's native species. Johnston's attention last week was focused on sending Governor Jerry Brown [a letter](#) describing how she

In the *Record* article, Stockton Director of Municipal Utilities Mel Lytle described the city's wastewater treatment plant gates that are the last line of defense in preventing a major sewage overflow from Stockton's sewage system:

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was "shocked" that he was planning to make an announcement about the Bay Delta Conservation Plan without addressing critical issues to Stockton.

"They're corroded. They're gone. There's no way to control the flow into the wastewater plant," he said, next describing the plant's general condition. "It was sort of the lowest step of Dante's Inferno that you can imagine."

If Mayor Johnston is truly concerned about the Delta, she should focus on addressing the looming environmental disaster of a major sewage spill from her city into the heart of the embattled estuary. It is beyond the time for local Delta communities, including Stockton, to stop using the estuary as their own private toilet bowl.

The city needs a \$156 million loan to upgrade the wastewater treatment plant to modern standards, not easy to obtain with Stockton's current bond rating. Given that Stockton's sewage system discharges directly into the Delta, a seriously troubled ecosystem, it is vital that wastewater discharges meet the highest treatment standards. The discharge of untreated sewage to the Delta could be disastrous.

According to the *Record* article:

The city has two or more years during the design stage of wastewater upgrades before it will need the money.

Rather than address this major infrastructure problem that threatens Stockton residents, millions of other Californians, and the Delta's native species, Stockton Mayor Ann Johnston and

Sadly, two years will likely spell disaster for the aquatic life at constant risk of a toxic sewage spill from Stockton. **Moreover, the 25 million Californians who depend on the Delta for their drinking water are the ones that should be truly shocked by Stockton's repeated failure to take responsibility for its own contributions to the decline of the Delta.**



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A Project of the Coalition for a Sustainable Delta