

Smelt protections highlight BDCP need

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Water management in California has never been easy. The state does not receive uniform rainfall and those varied levels of precipitation across over 160,000 square miles of diverse climates and terrain require water to be conveyed from areas where it is plentiful (Northern California and the Sierra Nevada) to drier climates (the Bay Area, Central Valley and Southern California).

Making matters more difficult, even in the regions that receive the majority of the state's rainfall rarely receive an "average" amount of precipitation; Mother Nature tends to provide either too much (floods) or too little (droughts). The average between these two extremes tends to be more of a numerical guideline than a reality in any given year.

These less than ideal hydrologic circumstances magnify the importance of having a flexible system that provides water managers with the tools to effectively manage statewide water needs. This has been underscored by the events of this winter. California's water year got off to a good start with well above average December rainfall, but that was quickly followed by an extraordinarily dry January and February.

As a result of turbidity from December storms and a small number of delta smelt being salvaged at the

pumps that serve the State Water Project and Central Valley Project, pumping has been curtailed since December, **resulting in the loss of more than 800,000 acre feet of water to the Pacific Ocean that otherwise could have been put to productive use.** That is enough water to supply 1.4 million families for a year or 200,000 acres of farmland for a growing season.



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Managing the ebbs and flows of California's complex water system is one important reason the Bay Delta Conservation Plan proposes to move the diversion point for these operations upstream. This would reduce the likelihood of negatively impacting fish populations, while maintaining pumping

operations to capture surplus flows. This is the perfect example of the coequal goals of water supply reliability and ecosystem sustainability that the Legislature codified in the historic 2009 water package.

Combining a new conveyance system with habitat restoration, the Bay Delta Conservation Plan is the best solution to achieve the coequal goals. **So far this year, over 800,000 acre feet of water have been lost because we didn't have improved infrastructure in place.** Every winter that the state waits before implementing the plan is a lost opportunity for water users and fish alike.



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A Project of the Coalition for a Sustainable Delta