

## **Building a Sustainable California Water System is the Real Goal**

It's deja vu all over again for California water professionals these days. New water supply and delta protection alternatives recently proposed by experts and stakeholders in the CALFED process as solutions to our state's water problems now bear an uncanny resemblance to a similar solution rejected by California voters nearly two decades ago. Only by taking advantage of all we've learned in the intervening years can we prevent the same outcome, and move closer to sustainable water use and protection of watersheds statewide.

Sixteen years later, as the new coalition of state and federal policy makers take their show on the road to convince the State voters that the Delta can be fixed, a familiar piece of plumbing has reappeared. Included in the March 16 CALFED environmental impact document was a somewhat smaller version of the ill-fated Peripheral Canal which was defeated by 9 to 1 in this county in 1982, and failed statewide.

It is too early to tell whether or not voters will see the wisdom of this project this time around and approve the bonds to fund it and other proposed Delta improvements. But much has happened since 1982 in California and Santa Clara County to give us new insight into how we should manage our most precious natural resource. We experienced one of the longest droughts in recent history, and we learned how to become more efficient water users. In Silicon Valley, which has emerged as the economic engine for State growth, we re-invented many of our government institutions, and adopted technological innovations at a dizzying pace, including techniques for reducing, reusing and recycling waste products.

We have begun to use the term "sustainability" when talking about our urban environment, and we have started developing industrial processes that mimic natural cycles which produce little or no waste. These systems are highly efficient and very cost-effective, reusing pollutant by-products from one process in adjacent industries, minimizing the need for costly end-of-pipe pollution controls. We are also beginning to implement new ways to capture pollutants

upstream, before they reach the sewers or streams and enter our sensitive ecosystem at the south end of San Francisco Bay. What does this have to do with current plans to restore the Sacramento River delta? Plenty. Just as pollution prevention, water conservation and water recycling have contributed to sustainable water use in our area, so they point the way towards effective management of water supplies statewide.

Urban water recycling creates a "drought-proof" *local* supply which, after the capital expense is amortized, is among the lowest cost water available. By focusing first on local supplies, our own reservoirs and ground water basins will again be used to their full potential.

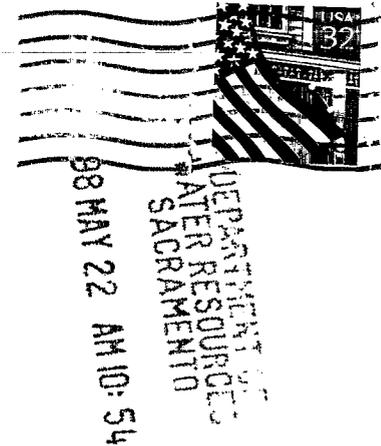
Finally, pollution prevention practices in upstream communities will improve water quality for all water users, upstream and downstream. By adopting "best management practices" to prevent pollution by industry and agriculture, we can avoid sending toxins into the Delta waters which must then be removed by urban users at additional cost at the end of the pipe.

We in Silicon Valley are leading by our example to show CALFED the way. If we can integrate pollution prevention, water conservation and water reuse into our statewide water program, we will improve our water quality and for the first time in history manage our demand on Delta supplies.

Now that the CALFED process promises once again to divide up our water supplies, it's time for all parties to take on the responsibility we in Santa Clara County have already assumed-- to prevent pollution, reduce demand, and reuse water as much as possible.

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