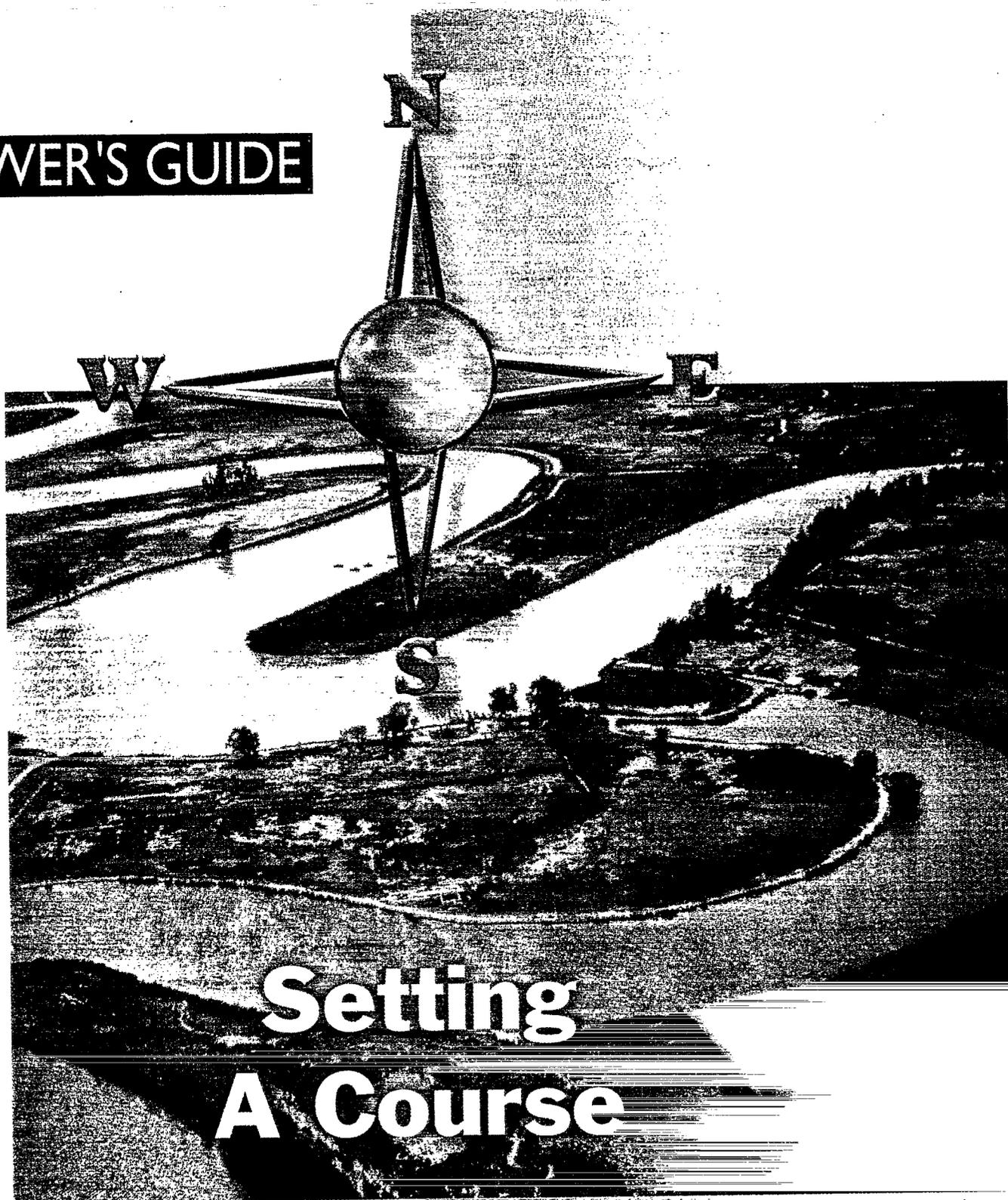


**VIEWER'S GUIDE**



# **Setting A Course**

# **The California Bay-Delta**

- A Public Television Presentation -

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F-002844

# Setting A Course – The California Bay-Delta

*A KVIE Public Television Special*

*Funded by the Water Education Foundation*

*with additional assistance from:*

*CALFED Bay-Delta Program*

*California Urban Water Agencies*

*Central Valley Agriculture*

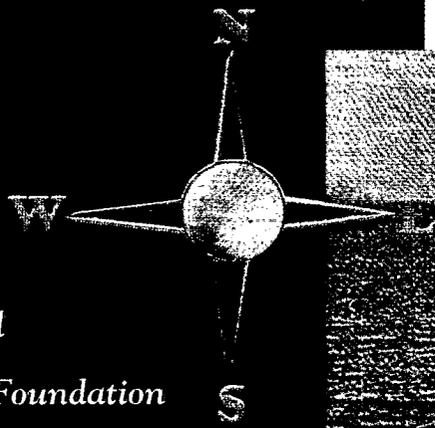
*The Hans and Margaret Doe Charitable Trust*

*The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation*

*Lehman Brothers*

*The Nature Conservancy*

*State Water Contractors*



*Host Timothy Busfield*

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Special thanks: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation,  
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**Viewers Guide**

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# Program Highlights



*"Quality. Quality. Quality. Urban water supply agencies now have a strong emphasis on water quality."*  
 - Tim Quinn, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

*"We're seeing the collapse over the last couple of decades of the Bay-Delta ecosystem."*  
 - Gary Bobker, Bay Institute of San Francisco



The California Bay-Delta comprises just 1 percent of California's total area, yet is the heart of both the state's water supply system and water controversies. It is important to nearly everyone in the state.

The Delta has been deteriorating over decades while the interest groups argue over who gets how much water and when.

- Habitats are declining, and some native species are listed as endangered.
- The system has suffered from impaired water quality.
- Water supply reliability has declined significantly.
- Many levees are structurally weak and present a high risk of failure.

Now the alarm has sounded for setting a course to mend the Delta before it's too late. The challenge of restoring the Delta to good health may have significant implications for the nation as well. The people of California and the water interest groups are being asked to consider three plans for fixing the Delta. All the plans include a substantial commitment to ecosystem restoration, enhanced water quality, water conservation measures and levee improvements. The greatest challenge is trying to find solutions among people who haven't trusted one another for decades. How do we



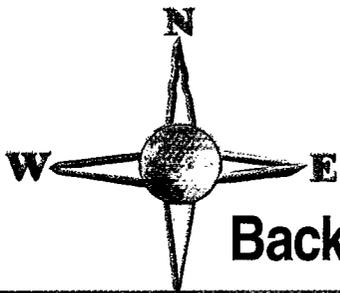
*"We can't lose farmland. We can't lose water out of CALFED. We've got to maintain our water supplies and improve our system."*  
 - Jason Peltier, Central Valley Project Water Association

divide the available water among those who need it: the people, the farmers, the animals and take good care of the water delivery hub called the California Bay-Delta.

CALFED is grappling with many questions and money to solve problems is always a major issue. Setting a new course for the Delta could cost between \$5 and \$10 billion and take up to 30 years to complete, depending on the amount of storage built. Who pays and over what period of time remain question marks. It isn't just the stakeholders who must agree, it's the public who will certainly be asked to help pay for the solution. From Redding to San Diego, from San Francisco to the Sierra Nevada, everyone has a stake in the Delta: jobs, quality of life and the future of the next generation is at stake.

## BAY-DELTA FACTS

- 7 million people get their drinking water sent through Delta channels
- 15% of the nation's produce is grown with water sent through this delivery
- It supports a \$24 billion agriculture industry in California
- It sustains 30% of the state's commercial fisheries
- At least 7,000 people or groups have permits to develop water supplies from the watershed feeding the Bay-Delta estuary
- It is the largest estuary in the West and home to 120 fish species, including one of the most productive natural salmon fisheries on the west coast
- Millions of birds migrate through or live in the Bay-Delta
- The vitality of California's economy depends on the health of the Bay-Delta system to ensure the reliability of current and future water supplies while enhancing the Bay-Delta's unique environment



# Background California's Bay Delta



Delta levee.

Flowing south, fed by northern Sierra Nevada runoff, the mighty Sacramento River meets the north-bound San Joaquin River just south of Sacramento to form the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Here the Sacramento and the San Joaquin mingle with smaller tributaries to form a 700-mile maze of sloughs and waterways surrounding 57 reclaimed islands.

The rivers' combined fresh water flows roll into San Francisco Bay's northern arm. Suisun Marsh and adjoining bays are the brackish transition between the rivers' fresh water and the salt water of the Bay. The Bay-Delta Estuary is the largest estuary on the West Coast of North America, where the mix of fresh and salt water provides a unique environment supporting diverse plant and animal life.

The Delta, as we know it, is a human invention. Early explorers found a vast marsh covered with bulrushes, called tuelles, and teeming with fish, birds and other wildlife. More than a century ago, farmers began building a network of levees to drain and reclaim this fertile soil.

Progressively higher levees were built to keep the surrounding waters

out, the lands were pumped dry and the marsh was transformed into productive island farms.

In addition to its local importance, the Delta is crucial to the state's overall water picture – it is the heart of California's two largest surface water delivery projects, the State Water Project (SWP) and the federal Central Valley Project (CVP).



*"Probably our greatest challenge is to get people moving away from thoughts they had 15 years ago, fights they have been in. If we're going to do a legitimate job to protect the public of California 20 years from now, we have to look at all the opportunities."*

– Lester Snow, CALFED

*Delta water is used in many homes.*

*Fishing in the Delta.*



Water that originates in northern California is pumped from the Delta and transported south and west through canals and aqueducts to cities in the north and south Bay Area, millions of acres of San Joaquin Valley farmland and more than 15 million people in southern California.

Water that historically flowed into the Delta also is diverted upstream – before it reaches the Delta – for use on local farms and in distant cities.

The Delta also is the state's most important fishery habitat. An estimated 25 percent of all warm water and anadromous sport fishing species and 80 percent of the state's commercial fishery species either live in or migrate through the Delta.



Populations of several species – including striped bass and chinook salmon – have declined because of a combination of drought, entrainment in pumping facilities, poor water quality and the presence of non-native species that compete for food. One of four Sacramento River chinook salmon runs, the winter-run, and the Delta smelt, a small fish found only in the Delta, are protected under the federal Endangered

Species Act (ESA), requiring changes in water project operations to help protect them. In 1998, it was proposed that three more runs of Central Valley chinook salmon be added to the endangered species list.

These required changes along with the 1987-1992 drought increased the conflict over Delta water quality, water exports and environmental and recreational values. After years of hearings, months of studies and weeks of negotiations, a landmark Delta accord was reached in 1994. The agreement among state and federal agencies and the water interest groups – urban, agricultural and environmental – included new water quality standards to protect the estuary, a plan to address non-water project problems and a program to



find a consensus-based “fix” to the Bay-Delta.

In 1998, the CALFED Bay-Delta Program released a voluminous draft document outlining the three proposed alternatives. Included in any solution will be elements of six main common programs: ecosystem restoration, levee stability, water quality; water supply reliability; water marketing; and watershed protection.

### Ecosystem Restoration

This program addresses fish screens, levee and riparian habitat, wetlands restoration and introduced species. It also includes the conversion of some delta farmland to wildlife habitat.

### Levee Stability

This program includes plans to provide additional flood protection



*“Who’s going to take care of the dead body once they get their water? They shuffle it around the Delta and there we sit.”*

– Sally Shanks, Delta farmer

*“The Sierra Nevada is part of the Bay-Delta ecosystem not by any map drawn by a bureaucrat [but] because that’s where the snowpack sits ... it’s inextricably linked to the Delta.”*

– John Mills, Regional Council of Rural Counties



Farmers rely on Delta water.

for the North Delta, control further land subsidence on Delta islands, provide uniform response for emergencies, fund levee stabilization projects and develop standardized levee maintenance agreements.

### Water Quality

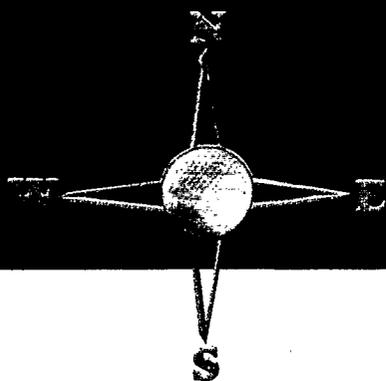
This program aims to improve the quality of water within the estuary. It would include the retirement of some farmland with agricultural drainage problems, management plans for stormwater releases and the application of herbicides and pesticides, which can degrade streams.

### Water Supply Reliability

This program would combine measures to improve water use efficiency through conservation, recycling and transfers with new storage facilities. The ultimate amount of storage is yet to be determined, but could include offstream reservoirs and conjunctive use and groundwater banking programs north and south of the Delta.

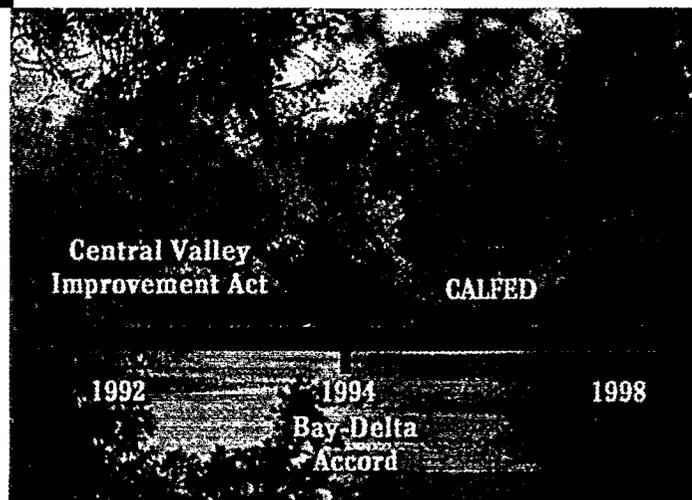
*“We need to capture water when it is truly surplus ... so we can transfer water when it is not injurious to the ecology of the estuary.”*

– Sunne McPeak, Bay Area Council



## Bay-Delta Chronology

- 1772 First recorded sighting of the Delta by Spanish explorers.
- 1849 Settlers begin farming in the Delta, a year after gold is discovered.
- 1861 Legislature authorizes Reclamation District Act allowing drainage of Delta lands and construction of sturdier levees to protect the area from flooding.
- 1937 Congress authorizes federal Central Valley Project (CVP).
- 1951 Legislature authorizes State Feather River Project (now State Water Project or SWP).
- 1959 Delta Protection Act passed to resolve some issues of legal boundaries, salinity control and water exports.
- 1960 Voters ratify a \$1.75 billion bond issue to finance the SWP.
- 1965 Department of Water Resources (DWR) selects Peripheral Canal as the SWP's Delta facility.
- 1973 State Department of Fish and Game (DFG) concludes Peripheral Canal is best Delta water facility.
- 1977 DWR reaffirms Peripheral Canal is best Delta transfer facility after reviewing 40 alternatives.
- 1979 Senate Bill 200 is introduced in Legislature.
- 1982 Voters defeat Proposition 9, which includes the Peripheral Canal SB 200 package, by 3-2 margin.
- 1986 Historic DWR-Bureau Coordinated Operation Agreement is authorized by Congress.  
"Racanelli decision" strengthening powers of State Board to protect all uses of Delta water affirmed by state Supreme Court.
- 1987 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) informs state that its standards are not adequate to protect Bay-Delta water quality.  
State Board begins Bay-Delta proceedings to revise water quality standards.
- 1989 Sacramento River winter-run chinook salmon declared a state endangered and federal threatened species. By 1992, measures to protect the fish are in place, requiring operational changes in CVP and SWP.

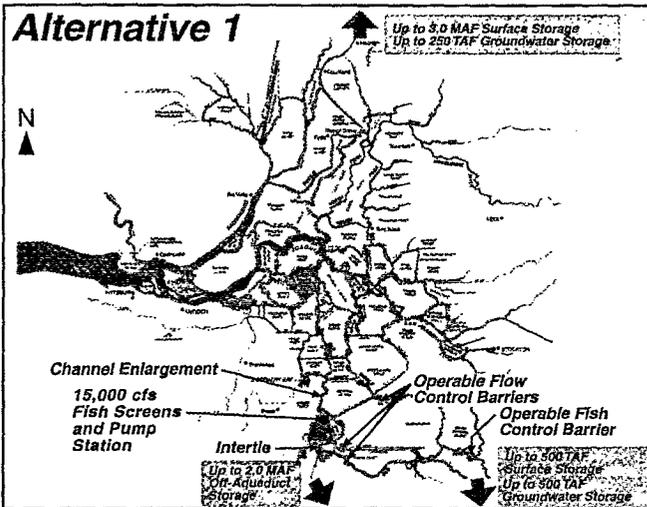


*Conflict over the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, Delta water supply and environmental issues gave way to peace in 1994 with the signing of the Bay-Delta Accord. Since the accord, CALFED has made major progress in working toward a consensus-based solution to Delta issues.*

- 1991 State Board releases new salinity control plan for Bay-Delta.  
EPA rejects portions of plan under Clean Water Act; calls upon state to adopt more-stringent standards or face federal rules.
- 1992 Gov. Wilson declares the Delta "broken" and asks State Board to set interim standards while a long-term solution is sought.  
President Bush signs CVP Improvement Act, which allocates 800,000 acre-feet of water annually to environment.  
State Board releases draft D-1630, interim standards for the Delta requiring reductions in exports to protect wildlife resources.
- 1993 Delta smelt declared a federal and state threatened species.  
EPA says it will proceed with setting federal Bay-Delta standards.
- 1994 State and federal officials announce unprecedented agreement on new Bay-Delta water quality standards, the Bay-Delta Accord.
- 1995 State Board adopts new water quality standards and begins water rights phase.
- 1998 CALFED Bay-Delta Program releases phase II draft EIS/EIR with three alternatives.

# Alternative Strategies

## Alternative 1



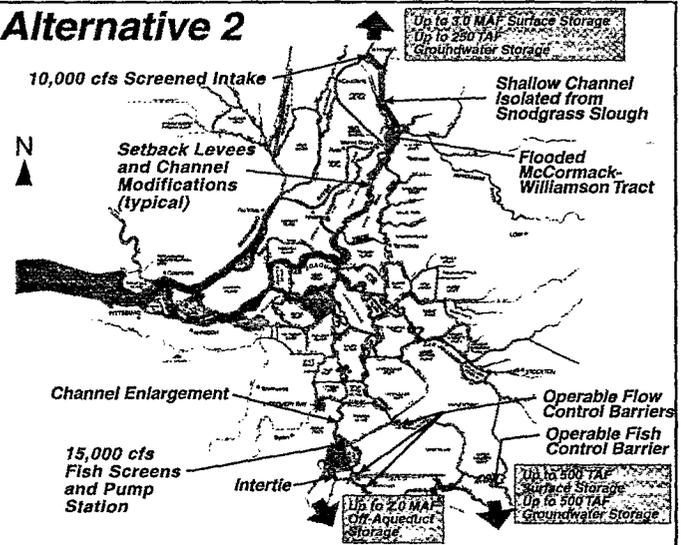
## Alternative 1

Re-operation of the existing system, with up to 6.25 million acre-feet of additional storage upstream and downstream of the Delta; operable flow barriers for the South Delta; large fish screens installed at the pumping plants; construction of a new State Water Project (SWP)-Central Valley Project (CVP) intertie to allow for shared exports.

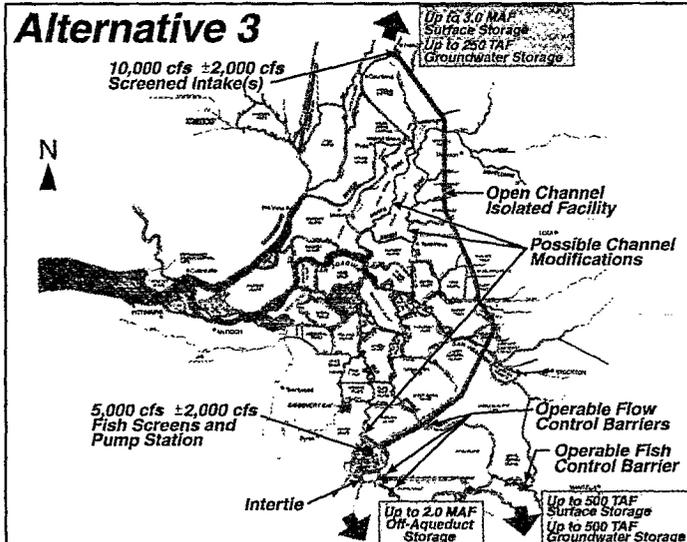
## Alternative 2

Enlarged east Delta channel isolated from Snodgrass Slough for improved flow of better quality Sacramento River water to project pumping plants; flooded McCormack-Williamson Tract; setback Delta levees; screens and barriers to protect fish; SWP-CVP intertie; up to 6.25 million acre-feet of additional water storage upstream and downstream of the Delta.

## Alternative 2



## Alternative 3



## Alternative 3

Enlarged east Delta channel; additional open-channel isolated facility with screened intake from the Sacramento River around the Delta to the pumps; setback levees; up to 6.25 million acre feet of additional water storage upstream and downstream of the Delta; screens and barriers to protect fish.

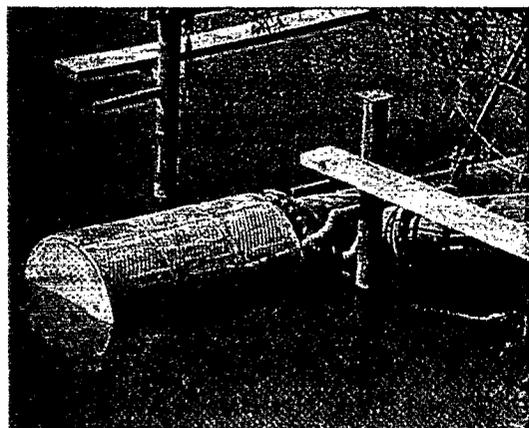
# In The Classroom

## Delta Dilemmas

Adapted from the  
Water Education Foundation  
school program  
"California Water Problems"



*This dam on a creek upstream of the Delta was demolished to allow salmon more access to spawning areas.*



*Fish screens on water diversions such as this one help protect salmon during their river to ocean to river life cycle.*

**Grade level:**  
High school

**Subjects:**  
Science, Social Studies

**Purpose:**  
This activity is designed to help students investigate the complex factors in the San Francisco-San Joaquin Delta region surrounding fisheries and water quality issues.

**This material is structured to comply with the curriculum organization established by the state science and history/social science frameworks. This cooperative learning exercise meets the need expressed in the frameworks for real-life problem solving strategies.**

The teacher should make the students aware that these water issues continue to be debated throughout California. For this reason, some of the information is established fact, while other material is still open to debate. Encourage students to think about the source of reference material and whether or not it is likely to contain a bias. Students should look for new information about topics in newspapers and be aware of current events surrounding each issue.

**Objectives:**  
Students will:

- discover that decisions about water are difficult and that many viewpoints and interests must be considered.
- describe the economic and environmental importance of the Delta as a habitat for fish.
- identify major causes and possible solutions to drinking water quality problems.

### Teacher Instructions for Procedure:

After viewing the documentary, "Setting the Course," choose one of the following problems for students to discuss in small groups. In problem #1, students are asked to reach consensus about prioritizing actions that will have an effect on the economic and ecological health of the Delta. In problem #2, students debate ways to ensure a safe level of drinking water quality.

If you want students to do some additional research before beginning their discussion, these questions may be helpful. These questions may also be used as follow-up discussion or as evaluation writing prompts:

- What is the State Water Project?
- What is the purpose of the Central Valley Project and how is it similar to and different from the State Water Project?
- What are the life requirements for anadromous fish (like salmon) that hatch in fresh water, swim downstream and out to sea, and then return to the streams where they were spawned to reproduce?
- Who determines the amount of potentially toxic substances that may be legally present in drinking water? Who monitors the quality of drinking water?
- How does agriculture depend on the water that passes through the Delta?
- What is the basic ecology and food web of an estuary like?
- What is the "CALFED" process and why is it important?

### Additional information available from the Water Education Foundation:

- *Layperson's Guide to the Delta*
- *Western Water Magazine*, January/February 1998 - "Saving the Salmon"
- *Western Water Magazine*, March/April 1998 - "Delta Debate"

Check out the Water Foundation Web site: [www.water-ed.org](http://www.water-ed.org)

### Other water web sites:

- CALFED Bay-Delta Program [www.calfed.water.ca.gov](http://www.calfed.water.ca.gov)
- California Dept. of Fish & Game [www.dfg.ca.gov](http://www.dfg.ca.gov)
- California Dept. of Food & Agriculture [www.cdffa.ca.gov](http://www.cdffa.ca.gov)
- California Dept. of Health Services [www.dhs.ca.gov](http://www.dhs.ca.gov)
- California Dept. of Water Resources [www.dwr.water.ca.gov](http://www.dwr.water.ca.gov)
- California Environmental Protection Agency [www.calepa.ca.gov](http://www.calepa.ca.gov)
- California State Water Resources Control Bd. [www.swrcb.ca.gov](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov)
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation [www.usbr.gov](http://www.usbr.gov)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, IX [www.epa.gov/region09](http://www.epa.gov/region09)
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)

## Student Page:

### Problem 1:

#### "Like a fish out of water...."

Salmon feed in the ocean and San Francisco Bay and migrate to the rivers and streams flowing into the Delta to spawn. Once eggs hatch, the tiny smolt make their way back down the streams and rivers to the bay and out to the ocean to grow to maturity and in 2-3 years, repeat the cycle. These fish are a vital part of the bay ecology and people like to catch and eat salmon. What was once a multi-million dollar sport fishing and commercial industry in the 1960s is now greatly reduced. Scientists agree a number of factors, including pollution and water diversions, are responsible for the loss of young fish. The winter-run chinook salmon has been declared an endangered species, and so must be protected under federal law. What can be done? As a group, put the following suggestions in priority order with what you think is the best solution first and the worst solution last.

- Release more cold water from dams on the Sacramento and Feather rivers to cool salmon eggs in the hot summer.
- Grow salmon in hatcheries and release them into the river.
- Build a canal around the edge of the Delta to carry water to the CVP and SWP pumps.
- Don't pump water to southern California, the Bay Area and the Central Valley because baby fish get caught in the pumps.
- Put screens on the places in the river where cities or

farmers take water out to keep baby fish in the main stream.

- Release more water from dams when the baby fish begin their journey to the ocean.
- Reduce the amount of acreage being farmed in the San Joaquin Valley so less water is required by farmers.
- Require all water users to conserve more water.
- Build more reservoirs to increase the water supply.

### Problem 2:

#### How much is too much? Water quality in question.

Since the Delta is a drinking water source for about 20 million Californians, the quality of this water is very important. Because the Delta was once a swamp, it has rich, organic soils containing compounds that are the building blocks for suspected human carcinogens (chemicals that may cause cancer) called trihalomethanes, or THMs. As water flows through the Delta, it picks up naturally occurring organic materials. Since the 1970s, scientific studies have shown that chlorine – the disinfectant of choice for surface water – can combine with organic materials in raw water and form THMs during the treatment process.

Bromine is a chemical in the same family as chlorine. Bromine is naturally found in sea water. Because the Delta is an estuary, sea water from the ocean is mixed with the river water flowing through the Delta as the tides ebb and flow. The bromine in the resulting mixed (or brackish) water can also form trihalomethanes. A recent study conducted by the California Department of Health Services found an increased risk of miscarriage during the first trimester in pregnant women who drank five or more glasses of water daily containing high levels of THMs, in particular, bromodichloromethane. This chemical forms when chlorine combines with the bromides found in Delta water during the chlorination process to kill microorganisms in drinking water.

#### As a group, debate the following questions:

- Should urban water suppliers and health officials continue to use chlorine to treat drinking water or use alternate means to make drinking water safe?
- Is cost a factor to consider?
- What can we do to improve the quality of the water before it is treated?

# Glossary

## AGRICULTURE

A large foot equals 326,000 gallons or enough water to cover an acre of land's foot (half field) foot deep. An acre-foot can support between one and two households a year.

## State Water Project

Approved by California voters in 1960, the State Water Project (SWP) includes 29 dams and reservoirs, a belt pumping plant and the 444-mile-long California Aqueduct that carries water from northern California to Bay Area users. San Joaquin Valley farmers and urban users in southern California use SWP's operated by the California Department of Water Resources.

## The Central Valley Project

Authorized by Congress in 1937, the massive Central Valley Project (CVP) encompasses 26 reservoirs with a combined storage capacity of 1.5 million acre-feet, eight power plants, two pumping plants and 500 miles of major canals and aqueducts. The system is operated by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The CVP brings water to Sacramento, Yuba, Shasta, Glenn and Colusa near Marysville.

## What is CALFED?

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is a joint state-federal planning organization established in 1995 to develop a Bay-Delta solution. CALFED is a collaborative process of state, local, federal, private and public interest, planning and policy-making groups and individuals. Advisory Council: The CALFED Bay-Delta Program addresses issues in the heart of the California Delta. Its mission is to bring state and federal agencies and the San Joaquin and

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415/227-0929

Central Valley Project  
Water Association  
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916/488-1638

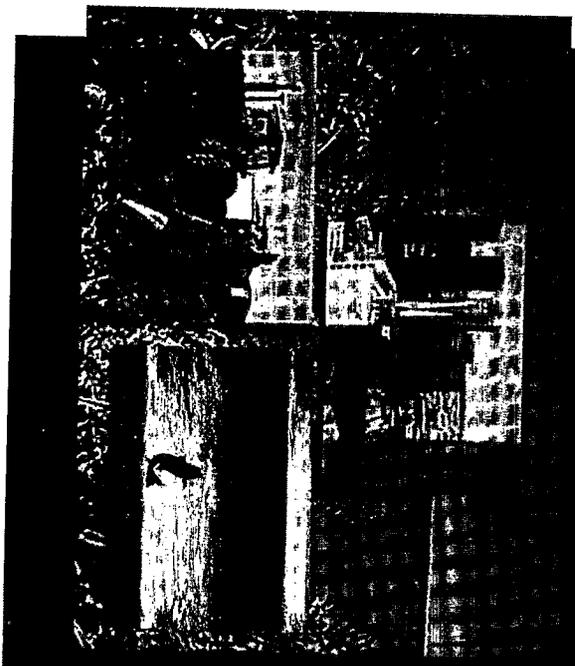
Northern California  
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20000th Street, Suite 333  
San Francisco, CA 95814  
415/227-8355

Pacific Coast Federation of  
Fishermen's Associations  
P.O. Box 980  
Eureka, CA 95960  
415/261-5080

Regional Council of  
Water Counties  
P.O. Box 207  
Eureka, CA 95941  
415/261-1007

San Francisco Bay  
Area Water  
1726 Franklin St., 4th Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94612  
415/252-9261

Three main  
interest groups –  
agricultural, urban  
and environmental,  
the water user  
which flows through  
California's  
Bay-Delta system.



# Learn More About It

The following publications, posters and videos are available from the Water Education Foundation.

- Setting the Course Video** - Accompanies this guide.
- Western Water Magazine** - Each bimonthly issue examines a different aspect of California and Western water issues.
- Layperson's Guide Series** - In-depth, easy-to-understand guides provide information about regions and topics of importance on California water resources management.
- California Water Map** - full-color poster map features natural and manmade water resources throughout the state.
- The Delta Map** - full-color poster map of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta system.
- Flood Warning** - 30-minute video documentary and viewer's guide about the statewide floods of 1997.
- To Quench a Thirst** - 60-minute video documentary on the critical water resources issues in California.
- Memories of the Early Days of California Water** - California water pioneers share their memories of early floods and water development.
- The Water Awareness Guide** - lists water sources for cities and irrigation districts; outlines how much water is used and how it is allocated; and describes the state and federal institutions controlling the water.

## ORDER FORM

	<u>Qty.</u>	<u>\$Amt.</u>
Setting the Course Video and Viewer's Guide - \$25	_____	_____
Western Water magazine - \$35 year	_____	_____
California Water Map - \$8.50 each	_____	_____
Delta Map - \$8.50 each	_____	_____
Layperson's Guides - \$5 ea., \$4 ea. for 10 or more of same guide	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> American River <input type="checkbox"/> California Water <input type="checkbox"/> Central Valley Project		
<input type="checkbox"/> Delta <input type="checkbox"/> Flood Management <input type="checkbox"/> San Francisco Bay <input type="checkbox"/> Water Pollution		
The Water Awareness Guide - \$3 each	_____	_____
Memories of the Early Days of Calif. Water - \$5 each	_____	_____
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To Quench a Thirst video - \$25 each	_____	_____
	7.75% sales tax	_____
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Established in 1977, the Water Education Foundation is a nonprofit, impartial, tax-exempt organization. Its mission is to develop and implement education programs leading to a broader understanding of water issues and to resolution of water problems.

The Foundation is governed by a 25-member board of directors representing a broad cross section of the state's water, education, environmental and public interest communities.

The Foundation's programs are largely supported by the development and sale of its materials. Additional contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

The Foundation can be a valuable reference for you. Please contact us.

*Rita Schmidt Sudman*  
Executive Director  
Water Education Foundation



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**Visit the Water Education  
Foundation's Website at:  
[www.water-ed.org](http://www.water-ed.org)**



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