

# Delta decisions must be made in the open

By Don Nottoli and Katherine Miller Special to The Bee

California stands at a decisive crossroads. Our water needs for agriculture, business and residential use continue to grow while the consequences of drought, increased population and climate change are dangerously diminishing our water supplies.

To their collective credit, Gov. Jerry Brown, the Legislature and Congress have made finding long-term water solutions a top priority for 2015. Still, the range of competing and entrenched water interests (agriculture, water purveyors, environmentalists, local governments and ratepayers, among others) will only find a solution through an open, collaborative process.

Transparent policymaking that results in a consensus of the many rather than backroom decisions of the few is critical to achieving real progress. Open discussion is the key to success in allocating funds from the Proposition 1 water bond, sorting out highly contentious Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta issues and recasting federal government policies.

The Delta Counties Coalition, composed of the five county governments that contain California's most important water resource, stands ready to work in a constructive, open manner. Our collaboration over the past seven years has been critically important in protecting the interests of the Delta and California's precious water supply.

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Coalition leaders have met with policymakers, local governments, and water and environmental stakeholders to discuss alternatives to building a taxpayer-funded, multibillion-dollar twin tunnels project that has been negotiated without broad input, violates state and federal environmental law, and won't deliver a single drop of new water. As a result, we have developed a statewide solution that genuinely meets the criteria of the 2009 law that established co-equal goals of water supply reliability and restoring the Delta ecosystem.

The coalition's Delta plan includes:

- Improving the ability to move water with cost-effective system improvements.
- Increasing storage capacity to better capture rainfall and snowmelt.
- Reinforcing our levees because failures would be disastrous for the Delta's water quality and supply.
- Helping local communities be more self-reliant by encouraging storage, conservation, water reuse and recycling, and desalination.



- Restoring the Delta's health so that it can continue its role as an economic, agricultural, recreational and environmental engine for the region and state.

As regional leaders, we want solutions that respect and speak to the interests of all Californians. We are encouraged that this can happen in 2015 but are concerned about the possibility of parochial water policies being put forward in the coming months.

Together let's embrace an open process and seize the opportunity to move California's water needs forward.

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