REPORT

DATE: April 6, 2006

TO: Regional Council

FROM: Daniel E. Griset, Senior Regional Planner, (213) 236-1895, griset@scag.ca.gov

SUBJECT: South Delta Improvements Program

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL:

RECOMMENDATION:

The Energy and Environment Committee recommends the Regional Council adoption of Resolution 06-472-2 in support for the South Delta Improvements Program, an implementation effort specified in the 2000 CalFed Record of Decision.

BACKGROUND:

The South Delta Improvements Program (SDIP) is a series of interrelated actions to manage water levels and water quality, protect fish and provide increased flexibility for operations of the Central Valley Project (CVP) and the State Water Project (SWP). The sponsors of the Program are the United States Bureau of Reclamation (BoR) and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), working as lead Federal and State agencies, respectively, for SDIP.

In its discussion of the Program the Water Policy Task Force asked for an adjustment in the language of Resolution 06-472-2 that would make clear two concerns of the Task Force: that extensive scientific studies on the Delta be used in defining problems and setting future policy and that Delta ecosystem and fishery improvements were needed before it was safe to increase water exports from the Delta. Staff modified the language in the final Resolved statement of the Resolution to give these concerns greater visibility.

The specific actions of the Program include the following:

- Replace a seasonal rock gate installed to protect fish with a permanent operable gate at the Head of Old River,
- Replace three seasonal rock gates with permanent operable flow gates on Middle River, Grantline Canal and Old River (near the city of Tracy),
- Improve flow conditions in south Delta channels with limited dredging in Middle River, Old River and West Canal,
- Extend 24 existing local agricultural diversions in the south Delta to deeper water to limit the necessity for more frequent gate operations, and

- Increase the permitted diversion capacity at the SWP Clifton Court Forebay to allow more operational flexibility to increase diversion rates when the increase will not harm the Delta's fisheries or local agricultural users.

The SDIP has been proposed in response to three important water management needs.

1. The operations of the SWP and CVP export facilities in the south Delta can change flow patterns in the local channels. This can cause migrating San Joaquin River fall- /late fall-run Chinook salmon, a candidate for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act, to move into the south Delta, primarily through Old River where fish mortality increases due to predators and higher levels of exposure to export facilities and agricultural diversions. Keeping fall- and late fall-run Chinook salmon in the main channel of the San Joaquin River until they reach the central Delta may increase their survival.

2. Local South Delta water users downstream of the head of Old River are affected by water quality and water levels at each intake location. These conditions are influenced by many factors, one of which is diversions in the south Delta by the SWP and CVP.

3. There are unmet water supply needs, with respect to quantity and reliability, south of the Delta for agriculture, municipal and industrial, and environmental uses.

Meeting these objectives by implementing the SDIP is intended to provide increased operational flexibility and the ability to respond to real-time fish conditions while improving water supply reliability.

The four permanent, operable gates proposed through SDIP will replace the current, cumbersome, seasonable rock gates that have been installed by the DWR. The operable gates provide operational flexibility that the seasonable rock gates do not have. This flexibility will allow the gates to be operated on a "real-time" basis in response to unanticipated, changing conditions in the south Delta region.

The flow control gates would be operated from April through November on an as-needed basis to protect water levels and water quality for local agricultural diversions. The gate at the Head of Old River would normally be closed from mid-April through mid-May during the outmigration period for San Joaquin River salmon smelts and from September through October, as needed, to improve dissolved oxygen content on the stretch of the San Joaquin River from Old River to the Stockton Deep Water Ship Channel for inmigrating adult salmon during the pre-spawning period. Operation of the gates outside of these "pre-set" periods would only be on an as-needed basis subject to prior approval by State and federal fish and wildlife agencies.

DWR and BoR plan to implement the proposed actions under SDIP in two separate and distinct stages. The Final EIR/S for SDIP has identified a preferred alternative for gate construction and operation, channel dredging and agricultural diversion relocation (Stage 1 actions). The Final EIR/S also includes a range of alternatives for increasing the maximum diversion limit for Clifton Court Forebay up to 8500 cubic feet per second (cfs) (Stage 2 action) but will not identify a preferred alternative. After the Stage 1 decision documents are completed (Record of Decision and Notice of Determination), various

public workshops and forums will be held around the State to gather further public input before identifying a preferred alternative for increasing the diversion limit to 8500 cfs. Once the preferred 8500 alternative has been identified, it will be submitted to the public for further review/comment and a final decision will be made by DWR and BoR in a subsequent ROD/NOD. The preferred 8500 alternative would be implemented after the completion of construction of the Stage 1 actions.

If approved, completion of channel dredging and diversion extensions is expected by Fall 2008 and completion of the four permanent gates is scheduled for Spring 2009 (Stage 1 actions). Implementation of the preferred operational alternative for 8500 cfs would happen after the construction of the Stage 1 actions. The cost for these actions has been estimated at about $90 million. The source of funds are varied, ranging from voter-approved Propositions 204 (approved in 1995), 13 (approved in 2000), 50 (approved in 2002), the 1992 Central Valley Project Improvement Act, CVP, SWP and local funds. If the four gate configuration is implemented, the permanent gates on Middle River, Old River near Tracy and Grantline Canal are intended to improve circulation in local south Delta channels. An improvement in circulation is expected to benefit water quality and dissolved oxygen levels beyond the current conditions with the existing rock gates. Also, the gate at the Head of Old River would impede fish from migrating from the San Joaquin River into the interior south Delta, where they could be exposed to further loss from the effects of local agricultural diversions and the operation of CVP and SWP export facilities. DWR and BoR have proposed specific protective measures to be used during times when permanent south Delta gates are constructed and dredging/diversion relocations are conducted to ensure no harm is caused to Delta fisheries.

Detailed hydrodynamic and water quality studies of SDIP have concluded that there will not be any significant adverse effects to Bay-Delta water quality from SDIP implementation. In addition, DWR and BoR will work to identify and implement additional actions that may be needed to provide for the continuous improvement in water quality called for in the CALFED Program.

The August 28, 2000 CALFED Record of Decision specified that: (1) permanent gate installation, (2) selective channel dredging and, (3) agricultural diversion modifications, be carried out to improve conditions for local agricultural diverters. In addition, maximum diversion capability at SWP's Clifton Court Forebay (CCF) was to be increased to 8500 cfs and subsequently 10,300 cfs provided that new fish screens were installed at CCF. After two years of study, however, the cost of new fish screens at CCF was estimated to be $1 to 2 billion dollars. Because of this high cost, CALFED decided that SDIP should only propose an 8500 cfs increase, with the 10,300 cfs increase and new CCF fish screens requiring further detailed studies.

A summary of the Program is available on the web:
http://sdip.water.ca.gov/documents/SDIP_brochure.pdf

FISCAL IMPACT: All work related to the recommended staff action is contained within the adopted FY 05/06 budget under 06-075. Funding and implementation of this Program will be the fiscal responsibility of other entities.

DOCS # 119827 v1

RESOLUTION No. 06-473-1

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS SUPPORTING THE SOUTH DELTA IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

WHEREAS, California is facing a critical challenge to ensure a safe, reliable and high quality water supply for its growing population and dynamic economy; and

WHEREAS, with two-thirds of California receives a portion of its water from the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, California must appropriately manage the Delta's water delivery system in conjunction with other ecosystem requirements; and

WHEREAS, in 2000, the state and federal governments, along with other stakeholders, launched the CALFED Bay-Delta Program to manage the Bay-Delta's water resources and ecosystem, resulting in the South Delta Improvement Program as one element in this long-term planning effort; and

WHEREAS, the South Delta Improvement Program has two implementation phases: Phase I proposes to construct seasonal tidal gates to protect fish and improve water circulation and quality in the Delta, and dredge select Delta channels to improve water deliveries for local farmers; and Phase II proposes three alternatives for moderately increasing State Water Project deliveries by 2-5% and to improve operational flexibilities in the Delta water system; and

WHEREAS, the South Delta Improvement Program operating features are proposed in conjunction with continuing scientific studies that are intended to provide guidance on and assure compatibility between ecosystem safety and the delivery of water to urban and agricultural communities; and

WHEREAS, funding for the South Delta Improvement Program has already been secured through statewide passage by voters of bonds funding needed water projects;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Regional Council of the Southern California Association of Governments hereby supports the South Delta Improvement Program with its goal of increasing the compatibility of South Delta agricultural, fishery, and water export operations; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED that Program investments in Phase II must consider the guidance of ongoing scientific studies in the South Delta that are needed to better secure ecosystem and fishery improvements and to determine conditions for the safe export of water out of the Delta.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED by the Regional Council of the Southern California Association of Governments at a regular meeting on this 6th day of April, 2006.

TONI YOUNG
President, SCAG
Councilmember, City of Port Hueneme

Karen Tachiki
Chief Legal Counsel, SCAG

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