



PRESS RELEASE
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BAY+DELTA+WATER: BETTER TOGETHER
Milestone Conference Brings Bay, Delta Decisionmakers Together
on Freshwater Flows

More than 200 elected officials, agency leaders and community advocates from the San Francisco Bay & Delta regions convened on September 24th in Antioch to discuss the role that fresh water plays in the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary. Presented by the Association of Bay Area Governments, Delta Counties Coalition, and Friends of the San Francisco Estuary, this half-day conference focused on collaboration among the 12 Bay Area and Delta counties as the key to help identify shared solutions to issues of freshwater flows and impacts on public health, ecosystems, recreation, and the economy.

In his keynote **Congressman George Miller**, who has a history of forty years of championing the health of the Bay-Delta Estuary, including the landmark Central Valley Project Improvement Act in 1992, set the stage: “We used to have a bar room brawl about water; I am encouraged by the collaboration that is taking place in this room between Bay and Delta elected officials. This is important.” He added that he was “cautiously optimistic” that the water wars of old are showing signs of more collaborative planning efforts.

Other key stakeholders joined Congressman Miller in outlining the need for freshwater flows. **Tina Swanson**, Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council’s Science Center, said, “Freshwater flows are a critical driver for the health of the Estuary.” **ABAG President and Clayton Councilmember Julie Pierce**, in her introduction, added that the “economic health of our region relies greatly on a healthy environment.” She noted that “the need to restore the environment is not in conflict with, indeed, it supports our economic health.” **Mary Helen Rocha**, Mayor Pro Tem for the City of Antioch, in her host city welcome, put it in local

perspective: “*Antioch is dependent upon freshwater flows for its drinking water and its economy.*”

It was noted that the importance of freshwater flows has gained more prominence over the last two years as several cities and counties in the Bay-Delta Estuary have adopted resolutions describing the need for freshwater flows and other water related issues. Currently the Association of Bay Area Governments and seven counties have adopted resolutions. To go a step further **John Coleman**, president of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA), Bay Planning Coalition Executive Director, and East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD) Board member, said “The Governor should convene all 12 Bay Area and Delta counties to pull together to work on these issues.”

Gary Bobker, Rivers and Delta Program Director at The Bay Institute, emphasized: "There's one last, great chance to set water quality standards that require the flows needed to save and restore the San Francisco Estuary. But that means the citizens of the Bay Area and Northern California - the Estuary's natural constituency - must speak with one voice in support of strong new protections for the Bay."

The conference included a facilitated discussion where the attendees, which included 32 elected officials and representatives, were broken into small groups to identify their top three priorities for moving forward on freshwater flow and other water-related issues. Besides education and conservation, **Russell van Löben Sels**, CFO of Amistad Ranches and Delta farmer, in earlier remarks captured a common theme, “When you decrease demand for water, you increase supply. We need to work on the demand-supply equation.” One roundtable discussion resulted in a challenge to Northern California decision-makers: “We want to beat Southern California in the statewide race to increase water conservation, reuse, recycling and technology!” Strong applause followed.

Contra Costa County Supervisor **Mary Nejedly Piepho** closed the conference, reiterating the points made during the day: “We need your help to continue to foster communication between people of the Bay and those of the Delta. It is one interconnected system and we must see ourselves collectively as one people supporting one system for our collective benefit.”

The Rose Foundation, San Francisco Estuary Partnership and Friends of the San Francisco Estuary provided funding for this conference. For a list of speakers and topics, view the conference agenda at <http://friendsofsfestuary.weebly.com/conference.html>.

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