State Resiliency Strategies Show Significant Promise to Improve Conditions for Fish in California

Innovative and Comprehensive Approach Seeks to Improve Co-Equal Goals in Delta

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (June 2, 2017) – The California Natural Resources Agency today issued a progress report on its Delta Smelt Resiliency Strategy (Resiliency Strategy). The report shows significant progress on thirteen (13) actions taken in the past year to create better habitat, more food, and higher turbidity for Delta smelt, along with reduced levels of weeds, predators and harmful algal blooms. The Resiliency Strategy and its various actions are an important step forward in California to address the co-equal goals in the Bay-Delta.

Our broad coalition of public water agencies and companies throughout California applaud the Natural Resources Agency for its efforts over the past several years to aggressively implement the Resiliency Strategy, which has provided habitat, nourishment and functional flows in the Delta that show tremendous promise to improve conditions for fish. Importantly, the Resiliency Strategy also shows a new and innovative path to improve conditions for fish using a scientifically based approach to advance habitat, food and functional flows in the Delta. We support this new path and encourage the Natural Resources Agency and other state and federal agencies to build upon the success in the Resiliency Strategy by pursuing the following actions:

- A *Delta Renewed* Implementation Plan to restore ecological functions to the Delta's highly-altered landscape. This plan, with necessary funding, will build upon the Eco-Restore program by using modern and evolving science surrounding the Delta, including the San Francisco Estuary Report, as well as similar reports by the Lead Scientist for the Delta Stewardship Council and the Independent Science Board. Modern science is increasingly showing the importance of functional flows that connect water and land in a way that provides habitat and food for fish and wildlife. At the same time, the Delta Science Program is telling us that directing more water to a sterile and inhospitable rip-rapped channel in the Delta will not benefit fish or other aquatic species, regardless of how much water is applied. We instead need to spread this water out across the Delta and create the essential connection between land and water as called for in *Delta Renewed.* See: *A Delta Renewed: A Guide to Science-Based Ecological Restoration in the*

Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. (http://www.sfei.org/documents/delta-renewed-guide-science-based-ecological-restoration-sacramento-san-joaquin-delta.)

- Fully evaluate the 1.3 million acre-feet (maf) of water that has been redirected annually to Delta outflow over the past two decades, largely through the 2008 and 2009 OCAP Biological Opinions and D-1641. The current outflow regime does not seem to be working for fish and wildlife or water supply reliability, thus failing the state's co-equal goals. Adaptive management suggests that the use of this 1.3 maf of water should be re-evaluated and then re-purposed, if necessary, to more effectively benefit fish and wildlife beneficial uses and other beneficial uses of water--in the context of co-equal goals and directing water for more functional and targeted flows as shown in *Delta Renewed*.

- Further develop the opportunities and mechanism for an interim environmental water block that builds upon the Resiliency Strategy's "Outflow Augmentation" section and establishes a process for water acquisitions and re-operation for this purpose.

- Fully allocate the $2.7 billion for statewide system improvements in Proposition 1 (Chapter 8) as soon as possible, which includes an important asset to acquire long-term environmental blocks of water. As one example, water can be saved during wet periods in Sites Reservoir, an off-stream reservoir on the west-side of the Sacramento Valley, that could then provide more than 200,000 acre-feet of water dedicated as an environmental water block for the Delta at a later, more critical time.

We also support the Natural Resource Agency's efforts to develop a robust Salmon Resiliency Strategy that will complement the Delta smelt actions and offer a fresh, new approach to actions that will help provide resiliency for anadromous fish. In sum, the *Resiliency Strategy* offers a better and more innovative approach to improve the co-equal goals in the Delta, including conditions for fish and wildlife and water supply reliability. We look forward to working with the Natural Resources Agency and many others to advance and implement this important Strategy.

###