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September 20, 2010

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary, Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Lester Snow
Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretaries Salazar and Snow:

We were very disappointed to see a letter from several of our current and past colleagues demonizing your efforts to develop solutions for California's failing Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. We understand their concerns about the meetings that your departments are currently having with the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) steering committee, but we arrive at a dramatically different conclusion about your efforts. While they condemn your efforts as exclusionary, we fully support your efforts to provide direction to the BDCP Committee by convening these meetings – which we note include all steering committee members, and not just a select few.

Hundreds of billions of dollars of economic activity and the health of hundreds of communities and the lives of tens of millions of Californians depend on the BDCP getting real and valuable direction from your agencies. We applaud your commitment to progress and the hard work and dedication your staffs have shown in these meetings to achieve the widely agreed upon coequal goals of water system reliability and ecosystem restoration that will benefit all Californians for decades to come.

As you are aware, the BDCP is an open and public process that includes all stakeholders that are signatories to the Planning Agreement which sets out the process the BDCP follows. While to date only one member of the Delta community has decided to sign the Planning Agreement, all Delta communities could have. In fact, it is our understanding the Central and South Delta water agencies seriously considered signing the Planning Agreement, but ultimately decided not to participate in the BDCP. While their choice is lamentable, it was nonetheless their choice and not the actions of your departments that excluded them.

The positions advocated in the letter from our current and past colleagues is a thinly veiled attempt to replace the progress made by your agencies with the stalemate of past decades. Neither the state's water supplies nor the Delta ecosystem can afford to be sacrificed on the altar of attempts to include interests groups that have already decided for themselves not to participate. Within two years of the BDCP's initial work, some of the Delta stakeholders brought legal action to stop the BDCP. We would all prefer those groups had chosen a more productive path and we understand that, in spite of their decision not to participate, the BDCP will include significant sensitivity to their issues. This inclusive approach by your agencies is commendable and appreciated and we encourage you to continue your effort to include Delta stakeholders in the BDCP. However, at the same time we strongly support your department's work in moving the BDCP forward and that you remain receptive to greater inclusion of the Delta stakeholders, but not become captives to false accusations of exclusivity.

Yours truly,

Dave Cogdill
Senator, District 14

Dennis Hollingsworth
Senate Republican Leader