

# Can't walk away from the Delta

*Plan must go forth*

**Vacaville Reporter, 12-7-10**

The recent announcement that the Westlands Water District is pulling out of a comprehensive effort to fix the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is unfortunate, but it should not stop the Bay Delta Conservation Plan from going forward.

Westlands is the state's biggest farming district and encompasses 600,000 acres along Interstate 5 in Fresno and Kings counties. It relies on Delta water because it doesn't have much of its own.

What it does have is influence, as evidenced earlier this year by Sen. Dianne Feinstein's attempt to upend Delta environmental protections to secure more water for the drought-stricken region.

Westlands has been a participant in the coalition drafting the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, the goal of which is twofold: To provide a reliable water supply for those who tap into the Delta, while also protecting, restoring and enhancing its ecosystem.

Westlands, however, apparently is under the mistaken impression that the plan is being devised to ensure that its users have more water. At least, that's the reason it gave for pulling out of the process.

"Westlands cannot continue to spend millions of our ratepayers' dollars on a project that is likely to deliver no more and potentially less water to the public than they are receiving today," is how Westlands board president Jean Sagouspe put it.

What Westlands has forgotten is that the Delta is in danger of collapsing altogether, maybe from an earthquake destroying levees or perhaps from rising sea levels pushing salt water further inland. If that happens, Westlands -- and everyone else who counts on Delta water -- won't be getting any.

Westlands objects to efforts to address environmental concerns in the Delta, but those concerns are legitimate. The commercial fishing industry already has lost thousands of jobs and billions of dollars as the number of fall chinook salmon coming through the Delta has crashed. And those who live in and around the Delta -- as Solano County residents do -- have plenty of reasons to want to protect their environment.

Westlands isn't the only party unhappy with the way the Bay Delta Conservation Plan is headed. The San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority has said it will stop participating, too. Environmentalists and the fishing industry have been critical as well, but they haven't walked away.

There are at least 200 agencies and organizations that have a vested interest in what happens to the Delta. No plan will please them all. But doing nothing and waiting until the Delta collapses entirely is sure to please no one. With or without Westlands, the Bay Delta Conservation Plan process must continue.