

Wolk bill for Delta levee funding gets Schwarzenegger's approval

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Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger recently signed legislation by state Sen. Lois Wolk, D-Solano, to extend a cost-sharing program that helps many local levee agencies afford necessary maintenance and improvements to levees that protect lives, farmland and drinking water in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

"At a time when funding is hard to come by, this measure extends a successful program that helps to safeguard the Delta's continuing role as the heart of the state's water system, as fertile farmland and a rich estuary ecosystem," said Wolk, who also authored legislation in 2005 that extended the 75 percent cost-sharing formula until 2010.

Wolk's current legislation, Senate Bill 808, extends the state's authorization to reimburse local agencies for up to 75 percent of levee maintenance and improvement costs. Without the bill, the state could not provide more than 50 percent reimbursement after July 1.

Under the measure, the program's authorization is extended until July 1, 2013, coinciding with the state's deadline to reassess its plans and priorities for protecting the Delta and its outdated system of levees.

"This legislation will help sustain Delta maintenance programs during this time of transition. Until the state develops and begins to implement its plans for the Delta, the Delta Levee Program must remain in place to help provide necessary levee maintenance and improvements that protect Delta levees and the communities living and working behind them," Wolk said.

SB 808 is supported by the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, Central Valley Flood Control Association, North Delta Water Agency, Central Delta Water Agency, South Delta Water Agency, Regional Council of Rural Counties, Department of Water Resources, Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA), California State Association of Counties (CSAC), Valley Ag Water Coalition, Contra Costa County Supervisors, Contra Costa Water District, County of Sacramento and East Bay Municipal Utility District.