



### **Delta Counties Coalition**

Contra Costa County · Sacramento County · San Joaquin County · Solano County · Yolo County

*"Working together on water and Delta issues"*



March 4, 2021

Dear Members of the California Congressional Delegation:

As Congress begins work on the Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations bills and an economic recovery package, the Delta Counties Coalition and Natural Resources Agency urge you to consider providing assistance that can be used to match State and local resources devoted to the rehabilitation of Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta levees to benefit people and the environment in California.

We ask that you fully fund the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program and allow such assistance to be used to support all authorized purposes, not just safety of dams work as directed in Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021. The Corps' WIFIA program would create an opportunity for the State and its non-federal partners to access long-term, low-cost federally backed financing to support and accelerate non-federal investments to repair the Delta's non-federal levees. An allocation of no less than \$25 million to the Corps' WIFIA program would generate no less than \$2.2 billion in 35-year, low-cost federally backed financing (today's rates are 2.14 percent) to support needed levee work and similar projects nationwide.

We also urge you to allocate additional funding to the Corps under Environmental Infrastructure, applicable Continuing Authorities Programs, for its Delta Islands and Levees project, and to combat Harmful Algal Blooms in the Delta, pursuant to and consistent with Section 128 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2020. We request additional funds to the Economic Development Administration for disaster relief and recovery (Economic Adjustment Assistance Program) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency for pre-disaster mitigation grant programs, such as the Building Resilient Infrastructure and the Flood Mitigation Assistance grant programs, all of which could be helpful to addressing needed levee improvements in certain portions of the Delta. Funding should be provided, as well, for the Delta National Heritage Area.

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Roughly 1,115 miles of levees protect farms, businesses, cities, schools, people, water quality and a unique ecosystem of national significance in and around the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The Delta also is a crucial component of California's overall water system. Levees provide the freshwater pathway from incoming rivers to the federal Central Valley Project pumps located in the south Delta. Many Delta levees, however, are vulnerable. Strengthening these vulnerable levees not only protects people, property, and public infrastructure, but also habitat and open space.

California began providing funds to maintain the Delta levee system in 1973 and prepared its first plan for Delta levees in 1975. Since 2005, approximately \$650 million (combined State and local funds) has been invested in levee maintenance and improvement through the State Delta Levees Subventions and Special Projects Programs.

Significant risks remain, despite the commitment of these State and local resources, especially as we face rising sea levels. The CALFED Bay-Delta program set a goal of bringing all Delta levees up to the standards of the Corps' PL 84-99 program 26 years ago, which still has not been completely fulfilled. Demands for future levee improvements are significant. Depending on the level of flood protection, estimates for needed Delta levee improvements range from just under \$1 billion to nearly \$3 billion.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely,



Wade Crowfoot  
California Secretary for Natural Resources



Don Nottoli  
Supervisor, Sacramento County



John Vasquez  
Supervisor, Solano County



Karen Mitchoff  
Supervisor, Contra Costa  
County



Oscar Villegas  
Supervisor, Yolo County



Chuck Winn  
Supervisor, San Joaquin  
County