

State Senator Joe Simitian's

Unnecessary

"Peripheral Canal"

Is Threatening the Bay and the Delta

The Peripheral Canal: Will it destroy the Delta?

Joe Gray, Palo Alto, Calif., Summer 2009-

For the last three years, Joe Simitian, State Senator from Palo Alto, has been an advocate for the peripheral canal, a canal that was turned down by voters 25 years ago as an expensive boondoggle.

The Peripheral Canal

Simitian's proposed canal would bypass the delta and its estuaries by taking water out of the River just below Sacramento, rather than below the estuaries near Tracy. The peripheral canal would then deliver the water 50 miles downstream to the existing California Aqueduct where it would flow south to the Westland's Irrigation District and the Los Angeles basin. The price tag for the canal? Up to \$20 billion!

The Delta's Health?

Obviously, the peripheral canal would result in less fresh water flowing through the Sacramento delta, its estuaries, and into the bay. A good question is: what would this do to the already weak health of the delta and the bay? When asked how diverting water from the delta could possibly restore its health, Senator Simitian responded at one of his "Sidewalk Office Hours" in Redwood City that we would have to "agree to disagree" on that issue. When asked if Mr. Simitian could email me references to any supporting reports, he replied "I'm not talking to you anymore." Could it be that science is not on Mr. Simitian's side?

What Do the Scientists Say?

Two recently released studies by the federal government disagree with Mr. Simitian. This year both the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service issued their Biological Opinions on the California Aqueduct's impact on fish such as the Delta Smelt, Salmon, Steelhead, and Sturgeon. Both agencies conclude that delta pumping needs to be cut back considerably to allow more fresh water to flow through the delta. These reports, based upon the newest and best science available, say the delta's ecosystem is on the verge of collapse and warns that a peripheral canal may only further damage the delta's already fragile health. Then why is Simitian pushing for the canal?

Water for 23 million people?

Mr. Simitian claims that his peripheral canal

See **Canal** on the back



DELTA FARMING- Joe Simitian's peripheral canal would reduce the amount of fresh water flushing through the delta and its estuaries, potentially creating salinity and pollution that will not only destroy the delta, its Salmon, Steelhead, and Sturgeon, but the farms and livelihood of delta farmers.

Northern California Is (Finally) Waking Up To The Imminent Threat Of The Peripheral Canal.

Despite the fact Northern California State Senator Joe Simitian, (11th District), has been inexplicably banging the drum for a revived Peripheral Canal for several years (at least garnering approval of editorialists in the Los Angeles Times), there has been almost a blackout of news on having another whack at a peripheral canal in Northern California.

Fortunately, there have been 3 recent editorials in the San Francisco Chronicle that spell out some of the larger concerns.

Sunday, July 5

Take a Good Look at Costly Water Bills--the Ones in Sacramento

Sunday, July 5

Vanishing Habitat: As the Delta goes, so go our salmon

Sunday, July 5

Limit Agribusiness- for salmon's sake

Even if one is immune to the history and beauty of our public trust resources on the Delta, these articles should serve as an urgent wake-up call to what we may sacrifice if we pursue greed over the protection of our environment.

Please help! Here's what you can do to protect the Delta and the San Francisco Bay

First, whatever your opinions about a peripheral canal, or about the necessity of any changes to our water delivery system in California, I think you'll agree that open public discussions are needed. Contact your representatives, and tell them you want to be informed, and want to be part of the discussion, and the solution. Don't continue to let big agriculture and developer interests dictate what is done to scarce water and fishery resources in California behind closed doors.

Second, if you're concerned about the Delta, please contact and consider joining the following excellent groups; there are other terrific groups out there, but I'm only listing two here for brevity, and because I'm most familiar with them.

Restore the Delta www.RestoreTheDelta.org
209-479-2053, 916-442-3155

California Sportsfishing Protection Alliance
www.calsport.org

Tell Senator Joe Simitian you want rigorous, public, scientific debate on issues surrounding his proposed peripheral canal

More **Canal** from the front would keep 23 million people in Southern California from losing their water supply. The truth is that only about 33% of Southern California's water comes from the delta; the rest comes from the Owens Valley, the Colorado River and groundwater (wells). Even during the current drought, and even with the

THE STEALTH CANAL

Up in Sacramento there's an interesting cabal doing backroom dealings for the Peripheral Canal.

This isn't something they have wanted to be known, but I think it's time to tell them that their cover has been blown.

The ditch they're contemplating digging will be a budget buster
And 'cause it'll drain more water from the Delta, it really won't pass muster.*

*The Delta is collapsing, the fisheries' future looks grim and short
And they're proposing to fix it by taking MORE water to export*

to Central California to grow alfalfa and some cotton to give it to big AG--Something's surely rotten.

*Guys like Joe Simitian and Jared Huffman, they're meeting on the quiet
because if their constituents caught wind, they'd surely have a riot.*

The big water problems of our state require communication discussions of alternatives, plans for conservation.

*Not politicians sneaking in conveyances in the stealthy dead of night
Sticking us with this fait accompli, it really isn't right.*

*The peripheral canal could be a gargantuan disaster
Your fondness for it makes us wonder who's your master*

*So have some public meetings, and talk about the science
Have genuine discussions on the issues, instead of your reliance*

*on shuffling legislative walnuts, pulling wool over our eyes
If you're sticking us with this white elephant, it shouldn't come as a surprise.*

** possibly over 20 BILLION dollars--bond issue anyone?*

Kathryn and Joseph Gray are Bay Area residents in District 11 (Simitian). They believe that the health of the Delta and the San Francisco Bay are of paramount importance, and that no conveyance should be pushed through without rigorous PUBLIC scientific debate.

delta pumps idle due to the concerns for the Delta Smelt, these Southern California water districts still have adequate supplies of water. If Simitian's Peripheral Canal is not needed to assure a reliable water supply to 23 million people, then who really wants the canal?

The Westlands Irrigation District

During normal water years, between a third and a half of the water pumped from the delta is not delivered to people's taps in southern California, but is either lost to evaporation or is delivered to the Westlands Irrigation District. The Westlands Irrigation District encompasses around 1,000 square miles surrounding Highway 5 on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley, an arid area previously thought to be useless for agriculture due to the high level of salts and selenium in the soil and aquifer. With the advent of cheap water from the Delta, large agri-business operators began using the Delta's water to flush salts and selenium from the soil so they could plant crops such as cotton, almonds, pistachios and, more recently, cattle fodder (an extremely water intensive crop). The Westlands Irrigation District did not pay for the California Aqueduct, but it turns out that they use up to half of its water.

Westland's Drought Worries

Now, with the drought cutting back on their water deliveries, these large agri-business are mounting a huge lobbying campaign to get a peripheral canal built-- a canal that will allow them to pump more water out of the delta. It is these large corporate agribusinesses who really want the peripheral canal, and apparently Senator Simitian is listening.

Who Does Simitian Represent?

Why would a Senator representing the San Francisco Bay area counties of Santa Clara, San Mateo and Santa Cruz be concerned with

Breaking News:

The National Marine Fisheries Service, a Federal Agency within the Department of Commerce, recently published their Biological Opinion concerning the Sacramento Delta.

Their findings:

Water deliveries from the delta must be reduced by 5% to 7% in order to save Salmon and other endangered species.

The opinion warns that a peripheral canal would need careful planning and environmental review in order to avoid more damage to the Delta.

Their Comments:

Maria Rea, the federal Fisheries Service officer primarily responsible for the biological opinion, called the document "One of the most complex and scientifically challenging" the agency has ever undertaken, and said, "What is at stake here is not just the survival of the species but the entire ecosystem that depends on them."

a canal to deliver water to big agri-business in the Central Valley? Shouldn't he be more interested in the health of the Delta and the San Francisco Bay? When asked why he is pushing the Peripheral Canal to the detriment of the Delta and the Bay, Mr. Simitian recently replied: it is because "I represent all of California."

I, for one, voted for him to represent his district and the bay area, not Westland's agri-business.



Family farmers from North Delta CARES hold up a banner opposing the construction of "The Panama Canal North." Photo by Dan Bacher

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