

## **SAMPLE NEWSLETTER ARTICLE**

### **Delta Disrupted: Building an Earthquake Kit For Our Water Supply System**

As Californians, we're all keenly aware of the "big one" that's looming. So we buy earthquake kits, flashlights, bottled water, extra canned food for our homes—we take action to prepare. Those who manage our state's infrastructure and other public services should also take the necessary steps to prepare for a major earthquake. And they often do. Billions of dollars have been spent retrofitting bridges, highways, hospitals, schools and prisons. But to date, no effective measures have been taken to secure our water supply in the event of an earthquake.

It's time to retrofit our state's water delivery system.

We've been repeatedly warned by leading scientists, engineers, water managers and other experts, including the U.S. Geological Survey, that a significant portion of the state's water supply could be wiped out for a year or longer if a 6.7 magnitude earthquake strikes Northern California.

At the core of this issue is the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, a network of rivers, streams, marshes and grasslands—one of the state's most prized, yet most troubled, environmental resources and also the route for much of the state's water supply. The Delta channels water that is delivered to 25 million people, businesses and farms throughout Northern, Central and Southern California. But that water is ushered through by 100-year old levees that are weak, poorly engineered and could collapse in the event of an earthquake. If that happens, water from the San Francisco Bay would rush into the Delta, turning freshwater into saltwater. The economic toll of this seismic event could amount to \$40 billion from losses in water supplies, farm production, wages and jobs, and downed utilities.

To avoid that day, public water agencies have been working with state and federal agencies, environmental organizations and other stakeholders on a comprehensive plan to protect California's water supply, protect local communities and restore the Delta's ailing ecosystem. The plan, known as the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP), couples a new water delivery system with habitat restoration to achieve long-term water supply reliability and a healthy Delta ecosystem.

New infrastructure -- a tunnel -- would carry a carefully managed portion of water underneath or around the Delta, rather than through the fragile ecosystem and away from the weak levees. By doing this, we would restore reliability to our water supply, protect it from floods and earthquakes, improve water quality, all while restoring and protecting the Delta ecosystem.

The BDCP is likely to be one of the largest public works projects in California history and public water agencies have already agreed to provide the funding for construction. With five years of research and planning, and more than 300 public meetings already complete, the state and

federal government recently announced the plans to complete the BDCP and have laid out the next steps, including beginning the environmental review process.

An infrastructure project of such magnitude has required compromise between stakeholders and it is understandable for some to be wary of such a large undertaking. But we cannot let caution become negligence.

It's time for residents throughout the state to get informed and understand the risks to our water supply system and the solutions presented by the BDCP. The Southern California Water Committee has launched a public education program, "Delta Disrupted," to provide more information on this critical issue. To learn more, to request materials or to download a sample letter of support for the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, check out [www.socalwater.org/delta-disrupted](http://www.socalwater.org/delta-disrupted).

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*Established in 1984, the Southern California Water Committee is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, public education partnership dedicated to informing Southern Californians about our water needs and our state's water resources. Spanning Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, San Bernardino, Imperial, Riverside, Ventura and Kern Counties, the SCWC's members include representatives from business, government, agriculture, water agencies, labor and the general public. Visit us at [www.socalwater.org](http://www.socalwater.org).*