

Editorial: Act now on water agency's blueprint

Ventura County-Star – 8/11/05

**By Stephen K. Hall, executive director of
the Association of California Water Agencies**

When it comes to addressing California's pressing water needs, the Association of California Water Agencies believes there really is no time to waste.

That is why ACWA's 440-plus members devoted a year to developing an action plan that, if implemented, will secure our state's water future.

The recently released plan, titled "No Time to Waste: A Blueprint for California Water," recommends an array of actions and investments to improve water supplies, water use efficiency, water quality and environmental health.

Developed by a task force representing local public water agencies from throughout the state, the ACWA blueprint is intended draw attention to our water supply challenges and provide to state and federal leaders the specific recommendations needed to ensure California has the water supply system it will need to support people, jobs and ecosystems in the future.

Some of the most critical recommendations involve the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, the heart of our water supply system and home to a number of at-risk fish species. Recent data showing a decline in some Delta fish populations underscore the need for actions to address ecosystem and water supply reliability problems and allow the Delta to function better for both fish and people.

Other recommendations call for evaluating long-term threats to Delta levees and pursuing actions to reduce risks to the state's water supply and the environment; developing additional groundwater and surface-water storage; and supporting and funding local efforts to expand recycled water use, water use efficiency and desalination of seawater and brackish groundwater.

California has been well-served by its water supply system, but it has been more than 30 years since improvements were made on the scale required to keep pace with the state's growing population and changing water needs. A new study by the Public Policy Institute of California states that current trends in urban water use could increase by 40 percent by 2030.

Without significant new investments in our statewide infrastructure starting now, it will be increasingly difficult and expensive for California to support both a healthy environment and a strong economy in future years. ACWA calls on policy leaders and lawmakers at all levels to act now on our blueprint recommendations while we still have time to preserve both.

Steven K. Hall is executive director of the Association of California Water Agencies (<http://www.acwa.com>), based in Sacramento. His e-mail address is steveh@acwa.com. #