

April 23, 2009



May 13, 2009
Agenda Item 14

Can we talk? LAFCO says no: Refusal is shortsighted

Published in the Reporter

Posted: 04/23/2009 01:34:05 AM PDT

It wasn't deliberate, but the placement of two news stories in last Thursday's Reporter was telling.

On one page was a report about the Local Agency Formation Commission nixing a proposal to merely explore the idea of consolidating 21 levee and reclamation districts that serve Solano County. On the next page was an Associated Press story about Interior Secretary Ken Salazar pushing California to modernize its antiquated Delta water system.

Twenty-one separate agencies regulating levees in Solano County is a prime example of the antiquated system to which Secretary Salazar was referring.

Throughout the Delta, more than 200 agencies have some say in regulating the area's water, flood and reclamation systems that were designed in the 19th century. The inability to get that many groups to work together is one reason the Delta is dying.

The levee and reclamation districts in Solano County are among those that contribute to the Delta's overall health. The failure of a single levee can put pressure on the rest of the system.

Some of Solano's districts are well-organized and well-funded; others are barely getting by. The idea of consolidating some, if not all, is worth studying. Even a LAFCO report from last November encouraged some districts to consider consolidation or similar arrangements.

That report was looking only at maintaining the system that is now in place. As Supervisor Mike

Reagan, a LAFCO board member, rightly pointed out, there is credible research showing that sea levels are rising. The current levee systems' abilities to withstand that rise is questionable.

While consolidation wouldn't automatically address that problem, banding together and forming a coordinated solution could go a long way to leveraging state and federal dollars to actually get the work done.

Other LAFCO board members apparently aren't looking that far ahead. Too bad. Any consolidations won't happen overnight, and the rejected proposal was merely a suggestion to start the conversations.

That no one wants to even talk about it is disappointing, to say the least.

Advertisement



**UNIVERSITY of
SAN FRANCISCO**

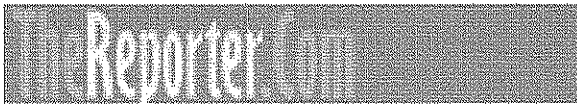
End-to-End Training as It Should Be: 100% ONLINE!

Earn Your Master Certificate in Internet Marketing

→ SEO & Paid Search	→ Internet Law	→	1-800-268-9943 USanFranOnline.com/FD
→ Online Branding	→ Media Buying		
→ Web Analytics	→ Social Media		

Print Powered By FormatDynamics

April 16, 2009



District consolidation proposal rejected

By Danny Bernardini/ DBernardini@TheReporter.com

Posted: 04/16/2009 12:59:41 AMPDT

A proposal to consolidate the county's 21 levee and reclamation districts failed Monday due to a lack of interest from landowners and those involved.

The Solano Local Agency Formation Commission discussed the idea of consolidating the districts -- primarily found north of Rio Vista and near the Suisun Marsh -- because of increasing concerns that many appeared to be struggling to maintain their levees and operate in accordance with law.

Shaun Pritchard, LAFCO's executive officer, said many of the districts weighed in on the idea, and combined with a majority of the LAFCO board, said there wasn't a need to consolidate.

"The feeling was the majority of the districts are geographically isolated, and those that aren't, are providing services different enough not to warrant consolidation," Pritchard said. "It's something LAFCO will have to look at again."

Reclamation districts in eastern Solano County and in the Suisun Marsh, manage levees and water flows into and out of farmlands or wildlife areas. Some of these districts are small, comprised mainly of landowners.

Supervisor Mike Reagan, who serves on the LAFCO board, said while some agencies are well organized, others have no leadership. He said he feels consolidation is necessary.

Reagan said with so many different interests of varying sizes and standing, it is difficult to come to

a consensus.

"There are a ton of those agencies doing a good job and some that didn't even show up to the meeting or answer the questions," Reagan said. "(The bigger districts and agencies) were saying 'we're not going to pay to take care of the other guys.' It's their property, they don't want to pay someone to do what they are already doing."

He said there is a genuine need to come together and work toward creating better prevention for levee failure and sea level rise. Reagan fears it may be too late by the time people realize the need to come together.

"How do we do a better job of flood control given the things were told about sea level rise? Other people don't see the need for that advanced planning," Reagan said. "They are going to actually have to see (problems), then there will be a crunch .. when they have an emergency. It's potentially a very expensive enterprise."

Pritchard said consolidation is more administrative, not based on preparing for future water issues. An organized effort would take billions of dollars, something his agency can't provide.

"It's going to be each district's responsibility to deal with that. That's part of providing service," he said. "Sitting here as a LAFCO executive officer, I can't predict how much it's going to rise. Right now, consolidation wouldn't address that."

Advertisement

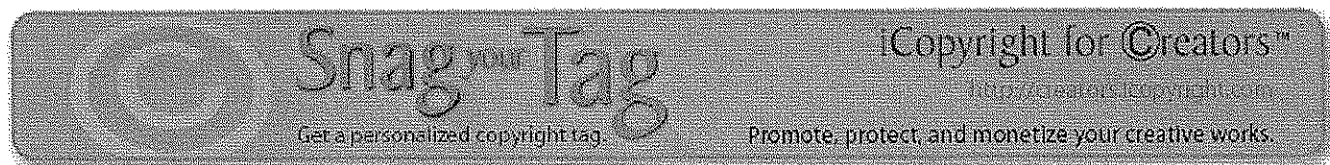
Bring the Classroom to Your Home
With a Degree Online From Florida Tech

Florida Tech
UNIVERSITY ONLINE

APPLY TODAY!
FloridaTechOnline.com/FD | 1-888-253-5946

Print Powered By FormatDynamics

April 15, 2009



April 15, 2009

Interior chief says Calif. water system outdated

By SAMANTHA YOUNG
Associated Press Writer

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar urged California on Wednesday to modernize its antiquated water system, while pledging \$260 million in federal stimulus money to help finance projects aimed at relieving the state's water woes.

California's massive system of reservoirs, pumps and canals, built a half century ago, was designed for a population half the size of the state's 37.7 million, Salazar said after a helicopter tour of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

The delta, which provides water to nearly two-thirds of all Californians, has become a highly troubled resource. Three years of below-average precipitation have wreaked havoc on its habitat and water supply. Urban and agricultural pollution are problems.

Salazar said the federal government was ready to help California overhaul its system and deal with its drought.

"It is time to modernize, it is time to make hard choices and it's time for the federal government to re-engage in full partnership with the 21st century water system for the state of California," he said.

The \$260 million is part of \$1 billion announced by the Bureau of Reclamation for water projects intended to create jobs across the West.

California's share will finance such projects as new wells for farms and cities, temporary water lines to help feed orchards and grape vines year round and rock barriers to improve water quality in the delta.

An additional \$135 million will be available to all states for water recycling projects.

"By themselves, these investments cannot and will not solve all the problems we face, but they are a first step," Salazar said at a news conference.

Two months ago, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger declared a state emergency because of California's drought. That order directed state agencies to provide assistance to drought-affected communities and businesses. It also called for a statewide conservation campaign.

The state has said it will deliver only a portion of the water typically allocated for cities and farms this year.

Schwarzenegger, who accompanied Salazar on the aerial tour, reiterated his call to build more dams and urged state lawmakers to place a water bond on next year's ballot. He also favors building a canal to pipe river water around the delta, an idea rejected by voters in 1982.

Salazar declined to endorse building new dams or a canal. He did rule out suspending federal environmental laws, as some members of California's Republican congressional delegation have suggested in an attempt to funnel more water to farmers.

"That is not the solution here," Salazar said. "The solution that we're looking at is one that is going to have to be comprehensive in nature that takes into account the huge variations you're seeing in water supply."

Senate passes Wiggins bill incorporating sustainability strategies into LAFCO boundary decisions

Written by Editor

Sunday, 26 April 2009

SACRAMENTO – The California Senate voted on April 23 to approve SB 215, legislation by North Coast State Sen. Patricia Wiggins (D-Santa Rosa) to add regional transportation plans, including sustainable community strategies and alternate planning strategies, to the list of factors that local agency formation commissions (LAFCOs) must consider before making boundary decisions.

Digg

submit

The Senate passed SB 215 by a vote of 21-14, meaning the Wiggins measure now heads to the Assembly for consideration.

SB 215 is supported by the California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions, Mendocino LAFCO, Planning and Conservation League, Sonoma LAFCO and Trust for Public Land.

LAFCOs control the boundaries of cities and special districts, including annexations, detachments, city incorporations, and district formations. When preparing to make boundary decisions, LAFCOs must consider 15 specified factors, such as population density, regional housing needs, local general plans, and environmental justice.

“LAFCOs are encouraged, but not required, to consider regional goals and policies,” Wiggins said. “By controlling the boundaries of local governments, LAFCOs can influence the time, location, and character of land development. When a subdivision is in need of sewer service, for example, a LAFCO approval of an annexation of the territory to a sanitation district makes the development feasible.”

To plan for orderly development, LAFCOs adopt "spheres of influence" for every city and special district. Spheres of influence are planning documents that show a city or special district's future boundary and service area. LAFCOs' boundary decisions must be consistent with these spheres of influence.

“SB 215 doesn't declare a new state policy for LAFCOs to carry out,” Wiggins said. “The measure doesn't require LAFCOs to make formal findings when they approve boundary changes. It merely requires LAFCOs to consider regional transportation plans as one factor they think about before they vote.

“Sustainable communities strategies are tied to transportation funds and other incentives,” she added. “A LAFCO would be doing its county a disfavor by not acknowledging its regional sustainable communities strategy.”

Wiggins represents the state's 2nd Senate District, comprised of portions, or all, of Humboldt, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Solano and Sonoma counties.

Add this page to your favorite Social Bookmarking websites



Hits: 63

Email this

Bookmark

Set as favorite

Plan for East County fire board fails

By Matthias Gafni
CONTRA COSTA TIMES

Posted: 05/05/2009 04:15:28 PM PDT

Updated: 05/05/2009 07:18:13 PM PDT

MARTINEZ — Supervisors' plan to create an East Contra Costa County fire board to solve financial and staffing issues has failed, a fire chief said Tuesday.

The cities of Oakley and Brentwood have balked at joining the alliance, saying the economics and timing won't work, according to acting East Contra Costa Fire Protection District chief Hugh Henderson.

"We don't want to force government on cities that don't want it," said Supervisor Mary Piepho, of Discovery Bay, whose district includes that department.

The fire district faces significant issues: plummeting property tax revenue, a smaller piece of the property tax revenue pie than other fire districts, only two firefighters per engine, lower paid firefighters and a challenging geographical region to cover. Although many believe the Contra Costa Fire Protection District should take over the East County services, significant funding shortfalls present major obstacles.

"The only hurdle with that is the dollars and cents," said Piepho, who supports an East County fire and Confire merger.

Labor issues would need to be resolved to join the two districts. East County would need to meet

minimum staffing requirements (three firefighters and engine) and increase salaries to join Confire, Henderson told the board. However, such funding does not exist.

And that disproportionate funding has created political fallout.

"The city of Brentwood is providing over 50 percent of the revenue and subsidizing the unincorporated areas of east county," said Donna Landeros, Brentwood city manager. "It's hard to go to our voters and say we want them to pay more for a higher level of service "... when they are subsidizing the level of service elsewhere."

She also realizes that Confire has similar concerns about taking in East County fire.

"Confire doesn't want to subsidize East County and we don't want to subsidize the unincorporated areas," she said.

Piepho said she's pinning her hopes on the Local Agency Formation Commission and its ongoing countywide fire service review. She hopes that agency, which can alter fire coverage areas, pushes Confire to find a way to bring in East County fire.

"If LAFCO does its job I'm very optimistic we can make significant changes countywide to better serve the community with fire suppression," the supervisor said.

At the root of East County fire's problems is property taxes.

This fiscal year, the district saw a 7 percent drop in assessed values, totaling \$1.3 million in lost revenue. The district expects to lose an additional 8 percent in assessed value next year, cutting another \$1.7 million in property tax revenue. Property tax

Advertisement



End-to-End Training as It Should Be: 100% ONLINE!

Earn Your Master Certificate in Internet Marketing

- SEO & Paid Search
- Online Branding
- Web Analytics
- Internet Law
- Media Buying
- Social Media

→ 1-800-268-9943
USanFranOnline.com/FD

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

revenue represents 90 percent of the district's funding.

Making matters worse for the district is its small percentage of the property tax pie. For every \$1 in property tax from East County residents the district receives 6 to 7 cents. The average tax rate in Confire is about 13 to 15 cents on the dollar.

"How do we provide 21st century fire and public safety in an economic model designed in 1978," asked Piepho, referring to that year's voter-approved Proposition 13 property tax limitation. The state law froze East County's portion of property tax revenues more than three decades ago when the region was largely rural and served by volunteer firefighters.

Reach Matthias Gafni at 925-952-5053 or mgafni@bayareanewsgroup.com.

Advertisement



Florida Tech
UNIVERSITY ONLINE

**Bring the Classroom to Your Home
With a Degree Online From Florida Tech**

APPLY TODAY!
FloridaTechOnline.com/FD | 1-888-253-5946



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™