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**BAY DELTA CONSERVATION PLAN: COLLABORATION TO MAINTAIN
RELIABLE WATER SUPPLIES AND AVERT ECOLOGICAL DISASTER?**

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ABSTRACT: The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is a 700-mile complex web of waterways, sloughs, canals and islands. It also is the linchpin in the State Water Project, the system that supplies drinking water to more than 25 million Californians. Water flowing through the Delta supplies 33 percent of the Bay Area's and 30 percent of Southern California's drinking water, and 23 to 90 percent of the Central Valley's drinking and irrigation water. Some regions are 100% dependent on the Delta for their water supplies.

The Delta covers about 738,000 acres and its waters irrigate 45 percent of the fruits and vegetables produced in the United States. Besides serving as the hub of California's critical water supply system, the Delta is the state's most important estuary and a vital environmental resource, home to more than 500 plant, bird, animal and fish species. There are a number of issues facing the Delta including subsidence, salinity intrusion, sea-level rise, risk of earthquakes, and fish conflicts.

The overall objective of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) is to restore and protect Delta water supply, water quality, and ecosystem health within a stable regulatory environment. The BDCP is being prepared through a voluntary collaboration of state, federal, regional, and local water agencies; state and federal fish agencies; and environmental organizations. The BDCP is being developed in compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the California Natural Communities Conservation Planning Act (NCCPA). When completed, the BDCP will provide the basis for the issuance of endangered species permits for the operation of the state and federal water projects.

The heart of the BDCP is a long-term conservation strategy that sets forth habitat restoration and water conveyance actions needed to achieve the ecosystem and water supply goals. Environmental documentation is scheduled to be completed by 2012 and the planning and construction are scheduled to be completed in 2023.

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