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SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS,
FOREST AND PUBLIC LANDS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER

**Congressman John Garamendi's Testimony before the House Transportation
and Infrastructure Committee Subcommittee on Economic Development,
Public Buildings and Emergency Management on California's Sacramento-
San Joaquin Delta: Planning and Preparing for Hazards and Disasters**

August 16, 2012

Chairman Denham, Ranking Member Norton, and Members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management, thank you for the opportunity to testify on disaster and emergency preparedness measures for California's Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. It's an honor to be before you today.

I represent the 10th District of California, encompassing the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the Suisun Bay and three of the five Delta counties. Currently thousands of Delta residents living in my district and the surrounding area are all dependent on a complex network of flood control infrastructure to protect their livelihoods. The rich, fertile soils of the Delta support a \$2 billion agriculture industry with over half a million acres being actively farmed. The Delta is also home to a robust fishing and recreation industry. According to the Delta Protection Commission, the recreational boating and fishing industries in the Delta support over 14,000 jobs. In addition to the economic productivity within the Delta region, the Delta provides fresh drinking water to over 25 million Californians. For all of these reasons, every Californian has a vested interest in the sustainability of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Today we meet to discuss important disaster preparation and hazard mitigation measures designed to protect Delta residents and the state's economy in the case of a catastrophic flood. In 2008, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Emergency Preparedness Act of 2008 established the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Coordination Task Force consisting of representatives from Cal EMA, Department of Water Resources, and the Delta Counties of Contra Costa, Solano, Yolo, San Joaquin, and Sacramento. In January 2012, the Task Force culminated its work with the release of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Multi-Hazard Coordinated Task Force Report, in which the Task Force lays out a set of specific recommendations for how to best prepare and respond to a flood emergency. I applaud the Task Force for their hard work and dedication to this issue, and these recommendations provide an important framework for moving forward. I also recognize, as stated by the Task Force, the challenges associated with implementing the recommendations, particularly when it comes to funding. As a Member of Congress representing this region, I am committed to working with Cal EMA, the Delta Counties, and my colleagues in

Congress to find federal funding streams necessary so that the Task Force recommendations can be realized.

In addition to implementing disaster response strategies, we must also look at ways to reduce risk. There is no question that the state of flood control infrastructure in the Delta is in dire need of investment and repair. There is also no question that California is earthquake prone and that the sea level is rising. A study commissioned by the state estimated that a catastrophic levee failure in the Delta would cost water users in the range of \$8 billion to \$16 billion, depending on season and length of time required to restore water deliveries. This doesn't even take into account the thousands of lives that would be at risk, the tens of billions in property damage, impacts to key infrastructure including several major highways and gas and power lines, and losses to Delta agriculture. These figures clearly demonstrate why risk reduction is so critical, and recent reports indicate that armoring key Delta levees is possible. Both the Delta Protection Commission and the Public Policy Institute of California estimate the cost of seismic levee upgrades to be between just \$2 billion and \$4 billion. A simple cost comparison implies that a small investment in Delta levee improvements could avoid much larger economic losses down the road.

This discussion ties in directly with Governor Brown's July 25th announcement regarding the direction that the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) is headed. The current BDCP proposal calls for dual conveyance with water being pumped both around and through the Delta. This means exporters will continue to rely on the Delta and its levees to transport the water even after a conveyance facility is built. Yet, BDCP documents that were recently released show that the Plan fails to include any provisions regarding necessary improvements to the Delta's levee infrastructure. As previously stated, existing cost estimates demonstrate that seismic levee upgrades can be completed for significantly less than the cost of a 9,000 cfs facility and in a shorter period of time. This further highlights the need for a complete statewide cost-benefit analysis of the BDCP, and as the BDCP process moves forward, the plan must incorporate a strategy to strengthen the Delta levees. Both the Federal and State governments have used Delta levees to transport water to their contractors for nearly 80 years and will continue to do so under any dual conveyance proposal. Yet over the decades neither government has undertaken any rudimentary maintenance program, and it's long past time to do so. There ought to be law requiring government investment in the levees, and this committee should support such an effort.

In addition to improvements in Delta levees, there are other ways to minimize risk of catastrophic flood and impacts on water supply. One of these approaches, according to the Public Policy Institute of California, is by increasing storage capacity. Storage projects, such as expansion of Los Vaqueros, construction of Sites Reservoir, and conjunctive management of aquifers, deserve thorough analysis and attention. These key investments have potential to increase water supply for both water users and habitat, provide flexibility in timing of water deliveries, and ensure that California has a backup supply in times of drought or in the case of a levee breach. We must also be exploring and investing in new technologies to expand water recycling and conservation. Water recycling in Southern California could increase water supply by more than one million acre feet and help reduce Southern California's reliance on the Delta. For these reasons, I am committed to working with the Bureau of Reclamation, Contra Costa Water Agency, the Sites Reservoir Joint Powers Authority, water recycling agencies across the

state, and others to ensure that the feasibility studies for storage, recycling, and conservation projects move forward in the most efficient, cost effective, and collaborative way possible.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Multi-Hazard Coordinated Task Force Report is an important step for preparing and mitigating future flood disasters in the Delta, and my hope is that this report sheds light on the serious need for prevention measures. A comprehensive solution to California's water problems must include levee improvements, storage, recycling, conservation, and Delta restoration. These measures, when carried out together, rather than the current piecemeal course that the BDCP is on, will strengthen the Delta, protect and create additional water supply, and shield the state's economy from the impacts of a flood. I look forward to working with this committee, the state, the federal government, and all of the stakeholders on implementing the Task Force's recommendations and on a comprehensive water vision that will ensure a long-term, reliable water supply for all Californians.