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Feds promise more involvement in Delta

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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- **Obama administration has an 'interim action plan'**
- **'A full-blown crisis that requires all hands on deck'**

An "interim action plan" has been put together by the federal government to let it wade into the ongoing disputes over the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the largest estuary on the west coast and a major source of water for most of California.

"The California water crisis is a full-blown crisis that requires all hands on deck to help those who are suffering. We are moving aggressively to do our part to address the urgent need to provide reliable water supplies for 25 million Californians, while also protecting the Bay-Delta ecosystem upon which the supplies depend," says Ken Salazar, secretary of the Department of the Interior.

"The actions that Federal agencies announce today will have real, on-the-ground impacts in 2010 and will complement the state of California's ongoing response," says Nancy Sutley, chairwoman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

(Download a copy of the plan by clicking on the link below.)

According to the Obama administration, the plan would:

- Strengthen the federal government's coordination of actions with the state – especially its commitment to more fully engage federal agencies in the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, an effort currently underway to address critical long-term water issues in California
- Help to meet water needs through actions such as constructing projects that increase flexibility in the water supply system; enhancing water transfers; ensuring that the best science is applied to water supply decisions; and intensifying and aligning Federal water conservation efforts with those of the state
- Have independent reviews of key scientific questions, including a review of all factors that are contributing to the decline of the Bay-Delta ecosystem; investigation and mitigation of other stressors affecting water quality in the Bay-Delta and impacts to its imperiled species; advancing ecosystem restoration projects, including near-term habitat projects in the Bay-Delta; accelerating the restoration and propagation of Delta smelt and other aquatic species; continuing construction of fish screens; and addressing climate change impacts on the Bay-Delta
- Call for agencies to help deliver drought relief services and ensure integrated flood risk management, including the prioritization of projects and activities for flood risk management and related levee stabilization projects and navigation.

Deputy Secretary of the Interior David Hayes says that federal officials reviewed and considered public comments in preparing this interim plan. "This plan was produced on an expedited basis due to the crisis, and it will remain a living document that is updated and revised on a going-forward basis," he says.

"We are encouraged by the initiatives and progress outlined in this action plan for the Delta. It signals the strong commitment of federal agencies to resolve California's pressing water challenges and, more importantly, to work more closely with state agencies in dealing with the complex resources issues in the Delta," says California Department of Water Resources Director Lester Snow.

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