

Update on the State Water Board’s Bay-Delta Plan and Its Impact on Solano County

Op-Ed By Cary Keaten, SID General Manager



Figure 1. Figure 1. (Pictured left to right): SID Board President John Kluge, Suisun City Mayor Alma Hernandez, Assemblywoman Lori Wilson, Solano County Supervisor John Vasquez, and Solano County Water Agency General Manager Chris Lee.

This is a brief but important update on the State Water Resources Control Board’s (State Water Board) ongoing revision of the San Francisco Bay-Delta Plan—a process that could have serious long-term consequences for Solano County’s water supply.

In September 2023, the State Water Board released its proposed Bay-Delta Plan for the Sacramento Basin. This was followed in October 2024 by the release of a broader *Plan of Implementation* covering the entire Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta system. Since then, the State has held five public workshops and eleven staff working meetings to further explore and explain the proposal. One of these meetings was dedicated specifically to the Putah Creek Watershed, providing local stakeholders with a focused opportunity to engage with State Water Board staff.

In parallel, the Solano County Water Agency’s Legislative Committee has continued strong advocacy efforts. The Committee met with Assemblywoman Lori Wilson—an unwavering supporter of Solano County—as well as newly elected State Senator Christopher Cabaldon to discuss the draft plan and its implications.

What's at Stake

Based on 20 years of hydrological and water delivery data, the current draft of the Bay-Delta Plan could result in **zero water deliveries from Lake Berryessa in 65% of water years** for Solano County customers. This would have catastrophic effects on our region's cities, farms, and economy—all of which have funded and maintained this water system entirely through local investment.

While the State Water Board appears open to a temporary compromise—the *Agreements for Healthy Rivers and Landscapes* (HRL Agreements)—these would only delay the inevitable. With an 8-year term, the HRL Agreements merely postpone implementation of the draft Bay-Delta Plan. Once they expire, unless strong, moderate leadership emerges in Sacramento, the full weight of the plan could take effect.

Make no mistake: as currently written, **the Draft Bay-Delta Plan would be devastating for Solano County.**

Advocacy and Legal Outlook

The recent meetings held by the State Water Board have not been negotiation sessions. Rather, they have focused on reviewing technical details and offering a platform for stakeholders—like Solano County—to express concerns. Despite significant pushback, **State Staff have not made any substantive changes** to provisions that negatively impact our region.

Solano County's elected leaders and agency staff remain united in pushing for major revisions to the plan. However, the legal path forward is uncertain. A sobering precedent was set in May 2024, when the Sacramento Superior Court dismissed all challenges brought by San Joaquin Valley water agencies, affirming that the State Water Board is acting within its legal authority.

A Call for Leadership

Given the limited legal avenues available, it's clear that the most viable path to securing long-term water reliability from Lake Berryessa lies in political leadership. Solano County's water system has been 100% locally funded—by its cities and agricultural community. To protect it, we need **moderate, pragmatic leaders in Sacramento** willing to champion real, lasting solutions.

The stakes are high. The time for bold, unified action is now.