



April 16, 2012

Daniel Hancock, Chairman
Little Hoover Commission
925 L Street, Suite 805
Sacramento, CA
95814

Re: **Reorganization of the Delta Stewardship Council - OPPOSE**

Dear Chairman Hancock,

On behalf of NRDC's more than 240,000 California members and activists, we write to urge the Commission to oppose the proposed agency reorganization that would place the Delta Stewardship Council in the Resources Agency.

NRDC was deeply involved in the creation of the Council, through the passage of SB 7X1. We believe that the independence of the Council is important in ensuring the long-term success of the Council and of the state's efforts to manage the Delta. Indeed, this is one of the core recommendations of the Delta Vision Task Force, which stated that "(i)t is essential to have an independent body (emphasis added) with authority to achieve the co-equal goals" (Delta Vision Final Strategic Plan, p. 2.)

There are several reasons why preserving the independence of the Council is important.

Independent Oversight of the Resources Agency: The Council is charged with providing oversight regarding the activities of the Department of Water Resources and other departments within the Resources Agency. This role includes broad independent policy guidance, a consistency determination responsibility, as well as independent scientific peer review by the Independent Science Board. We believe that, over the long-term, the Council's effectiveness would be compromised by placing the Council in an existing agency. This issue can be seen in the long history of challenges that the Department of Fish and Game has faced in serving as an effective regulator of the State Water Project.

Agency Coordination: The Council is charged with providing independent oversight for agencies outside of the Resources Agency as well. For example, the State Water Board plays an important role in protecting the Bay-Delta. The Council's current structure encourages oversight of all relevant state agencies, independent of the perspective of any particular state agency. This structure makes the Council more effective in encouraging collaboration among all agencies.

The Delta Vision Model: It is important to note that the Council was created as a successor to the highly successful Delta Vision Task Force. The independence of the Task Force was central to its ability to take a fresh look at Delta issues and to recommend a significantly new direction. We question whether the Task Force's success would have been possible, had the Task Force been created as a part of an existing state agency.

Public Credibility: The independence of the Council has increased the credibility of the Council with the public.

Lack of Problems Related to the Current Structure: Finally, we are not aware of any problems that have resulted from the Council's current structure.

We urge the Commission to support the current structure of the Council and to urge the Governor and the legislature not to implement this proposed reorganization. Thank you for considering our views,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Nelson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Barry Nelson
Senior Policy Analyst

Cc: Chairman Phil Isenberg, Delta Stewardship Council
Secretary John Laird