

Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta

The Epicenter of California's Water Challenge



Speaker Bio



Curt Schmutte, PE

Mr. Schmutte is a civil engineer and manager specializing in water resources and environmental planning. He is currently a consultant for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. Prior to his association with MWD that began in 2006, he worked for the California Department of Water Resources for 21 years. Mr. Schmutte has led multiple programs and projects involving the Sacramento – San Joaquin River Delta and Suisun Marsh, including levee improvement programs, land subsidence research, economic risk analyses, dredged material reuse projects, water quality studies and environmental restoration projects. Since joining the Metropolitan Water District effort, he has been managing large scale ecosystem restoration projects, planning emergency drought actions to protect Delta water quality, implementing seismic flood risk mitigation strategies, planning actions to protect Delta smelt and advancing new conceptual water conveyance alternatives to achieve a sustainable Delta for both water supplies and the ecosystem. He also served as a lead expert witness for DWR on the Jones Tract levee failure litigation.

Caltech Earth Week Speaker Series

MONDAY, APRIL 21, 2014

The Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta is the hub of California's water system, home to a unique ecosystem and a diverse recreational and agricultural economy. This portion of California's geography is extremely complex, highly altered and not sustainable in its current form or function. The problems range from declining health of the Delta fish species, on-going island subsidence, potential levee failures due to earthquakes, predicted sea level rise, water quality degradation and urbanization. The fishery issues stem from invasive species, loss of ecosystem habitat, water pollution, food web impacts and fish conflicts with diversions. The tasks at hand are urgent and the stakes for California are high. California has the ninth largest economy in the world and water exports from the Delta support a significant part of this economy. The challenge is particularly large given the magnitude and complexity of the many proposed changes to address the Delta's ecosystem, water system and affected communities. The Delta presents what is arguably California's most important test of successfully managing change in order to address the needs of the environment, economy and local communities.

4:30 — 6:00 pm | Ramo Auditorium