

# Opinion

Comments by our  
staff & contributors

Sacramento Business Journal | April 25, 2013 | [sacramentobusinessjournal.com](http://sacramentobusinessjournal.com)

## Delta project is good business

### Union leader says proposed tunnels would be good for the state — and the economy

In his State of the State speech early this year, Gov. Jerry Brown warned that an earthquake, 100-year storm or sea-level rise could create a disaster “comparable to Hurricane Katrina or Superstorm Sandy: losses of at least \$100 billion and 40,000 jobs.”

Brown’s warning concerns the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the state’s water supply. Like a crumbling old Victorian mansion, once a source of great pride, California’s water infrastructure is showing its age. The thriving economy built on that infrastructure, the California dream, was the envy of the world. But now, our aging infrastructure and the economy that rests on it are in trouble.

The Delta, western North America’s largest estuary, is literally and figuratively the heart of California’s water supply system. Some 500,000 residents live in the Delta floodplain and more than two-thirds of California’s residents rely on the Delta for fresh water. It is the lifeline to millions of acres of productive, irrigated farmland and provides the water that drives our

manufacturing economy, one of the nation’s largest. Today the Delta is on the verge of both environmental and structural collapse.

Pesticides, urban runoff, invasive species, sea-level rise, drought, and endangered species concerns have combined to put the ecological health of the Delta, and the reliability of the water it supplies, on life support. Habitat protection and restoration, an unrecognized concern when our water system was built out in the 1950s and 60s, can no longer wait.

Just as unsettling is the threat of structural failure. Water moves through the Delta guided by more than 1,100 miles of levees, some more than 100 years old. A powerful earthquake, unpredictable but far from out of the question, could cause catastrophic levee failure flooding large areas of the Delta. Water that agriculture, manufacturing and 25 million people rely upon could dry up for six months or more. The Delta, heart of California’s water system, is a heart attack waiting to happen.

The good news is the California Department of Water Resources is deeply involved in plans to restore and protect Delta habitat while maintaining a reliable fresh water supply for California. Along with the Delta Conservation and Conveyance Program, the department

recently issued a job analysis study of a creative proposal to restore more than 140,000 acres of the Delta and build a unique water conveyance system under the Delta that would both protect the Delta environment and insure water reliability.

Desperately needed, this fix is estimated to provide 15,000 construction jobs for over seven years and around 1,200 net new jobs in habitat restoration for 10 years. Hundreds of jobs in operation and maintenance of these projects will be needed for decades after the completion. These jobs will provide a tremendous boost to a region in California that was hardest hit by the Great Recession, the worst economic downturn in more than 70 years.

But it is not just the thousands of jobs created by the project that matter. It is the future jobs created by a thriving, healthy economy that relies on California’s complex water system. It’s the jobs that will be lost if that system fails us.

Most importantly, rebuilding our infrastructure and protecting our environment will ensure jobs for the future so our children too, can be a part of the California dream.

**DANIEL M. CURTIN** is director of the California Conference of Carpenters.



**DANIEL M. CURTIN**

Comments posted at [sacramentobusinessjournal.com](http://sacramentobusinessjournal.com) about last week’s Business Pulse Survey, which asked: What’s the biggest problem with higher education right now?

“Colleges no longer teach students how to think. They teach what to think and how to feel, and most of the perspective is left of center. College has become a social-engineering laboratory that focuses on the visceral and ig-

that isn’t going to happen because colleges and universities are rarely good at self-evaluation.”  
— Wayne Russell

“College is extremely expensive, probably not efficient and difficult for kids to obtain admission in their own state/residence unless their GPA is over 4.0.”  
— Michele LaPlante Fast

“This is an example of the Sacramento community showing it can get things done. Thanks to all who have taken the leadership in keeping the Kings here — particularly Mayor (Kevin) Johnson, City Council members and staff and the new proposed ownership group. Congrats also to the (Sacramento) Convention & Visitors Bureau for putting together this video which is being shown on Times Square. Very creative.”  
— John Hodgeson