

# Agriculture is losing water credibility

## EDITORIALLY SPEAKING

**L**IKE almost everyone else, we agree that the state must do something about the Sacramento River-San Joaquin River Delta. This includes the dual goals of a healthy San Francisco Bay Delta ecosystem and a reliable water supply for California. We back an open and transparent process.

But water players, especially those in the Central Valley and Southern California, have been trying to rig the system. This is not to say that these farmers and other water users shouldn't get their fair share. They should. Even so, they are their own worst enemy by relying on secret deals and using their size and power as their sales pitch.

But today's sales pitch is falling on different ears. Water leaders have focused on agility — being able to change quickly based on external circumstances, because change from the outside in — for example Delta smelt and fish decline — has been coming at an ever-increasing speed, and it's getting faster. But rural and urban water customers are changing, because technology is influencing customers and changing the way they interact with ag. Water power is not going to work as it did in the past.

### Demand for transparency

As a result, there is an increased demand for transparency, meaning your customers have access to complaints as well as accolades, through social media and new forms of communication. These changes are coming from the outside-in and cause leaders to react. Knowing this, it's evident that being agile no longer works. Instead, today's water leaders need to be anticipatory.

When you're anticipatory, you're creating changes and driving disruption from the inside out, rather than being disrupted from the outside in, writes Daniel Burrus, considered one of the world's leading technology forecasters and author of "Flash Foresight."

Instead, water leaders are depending on buying power and saying science is on our side, so blame those who want our water.

### Power plays

Example of this outside-in disruption includes Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who quietly used a \$915 billion spending bill to accomplish a long-standing goal of easing Central Valley water sales. With one sentence, the 1,221-page bill signed by President Barack Obama helps the Westlands Water District and privately owned Kern Water Bank (which we have written extensively about), buy more from

irrigation districts served by the federal Central Valley Project, or CVP.

For example under Feinstein's backed plan, customers such as the Kern Water Bank could now buy federal irrigation water from the CVP and then sell its state-delivered water to urban users and developers. As pointed out here before, that is just what the Kern Water Bank has done in the past.

### Science ignored

The state also claims science comes first but as our Commentary in Irrigation Extra in this issue points out on Page 28, the science is questionable. It is based on the Department of Water Resources modeling using its CALSIM II model. This model is used to estimate the availability of Delta water for export and favors such exports.

Independent studies of the 98 year runoff record of Sacramento River flows into the Delta confirm that the DWR assumptions are without scientific merit.

The system is designed to keep promoting exports, and by being disruptive from the outside in. Change must come from the inside out, because the outdated outside-in power rules will backfire on ag.

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