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City of Stockton officials, local businessmen and politicians celebrate the groundbreaking for the Delta Water Supply Project on Thursday. The \$217 million undertaking is the largest in city history

and will supply Stockton residents with water from the Delta. (Jordan Guinn/News-Sentinel)

Stockton breaks ground on Delta Water Supply Project

By [Jordan Guinn](#)
 News-Sentinel Staff Writer
 Thursday, October 29, 2009 11:57 PM PDT

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In a matter of years, Stockton will join the overwhelming majority in California by drawing a portion of its drinking water from the Delta. A groundbreaking for the Delta Water Supply Project, a \$217 million venture and the largest public works project in city history, was held on Thursday on Lower Sacramento Road between Armstrong and Eight Mile roads.

More than 100 people crowded into a tent to protect them from the wind while 16 engraved shovels stood in the dirt for the groundbreaking that took place at the site of the future water treatment plant.

"Today is a momentous occasion," said Stockton Municipal Utility Director Mark Madison. "We worked hard for 14 years. ... Now it's time to build something."

The DWSP consists of an intake building in the Delta, miles of underground pipes, and a water treatment plant on Lower Sacramento Road. The project is expected to be finished in 2012.

The intake building will draw water from the San Joaquin River, south of Empire Tract. From there, it will travel in a pipeline parallel to Eight Mile Road before reaching the water treatment site just south of Lodi. The treated water will then be sent to neighborhoods throughout Stockton.

"The DWSP will give Stockton more control and generate 700 jobs and bring \$80 million into the local economy," said Stockton Mayor Ann Johnston. She said Stockton sits in the middle of the Delta and has not been able to siphon its share of water out until this project came to fruition.

"Everyone benefits from our water but us," said Johnston.

Assemblyman Bill Berryhill said it was an historic day for Stockton. Berryhill owns farmland off Eight Mile Road and will have pipes running through his property. He said it made him feel like part of the project.

Two-thirds of California utilizes the Delta for drinking water, and the DWSP will enable Stockton to do the same.

With 290,000 residents in Stockton and the city looking to expand, the issue of a clean and reliable water source was critical to the effort. Stockton's 2030 general plan shows the city growing northward and a project to widen Interstate 5 is also being studied.

When completed, the water treatment plant will be capable of treating 30 million gallons of water a day.

The DWSP is funded through bonds issued by the city of Stockton, as well as development rates and customer fees.

Stockton officials said they were adamant about keeping the money in the community. The jobs for design and construction were given to local contractors and 50 percent of all laborers on the project must live in Stockton.

"This is Stockton's economic stimulus," Johnston said.

By using more surface water, proponents of the DWSP say it will protect groundwater resources and replace shrinking surface water supplies.

But the speakers at the groundbreaking said the project isn't a cure-all for the region's water supply.

"This will never negate the need for conservation," said Stockton city councilwoman Diana Lowery.

Stockton was able to achieve this plan because of legislation written years ago by Tom Shepard that enables municipalities

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to discharge treated wastewater downstream. The DWSP enables Stockton to draw surface water from the Delta while replenishing the supply.

Madison said treated water would be put back into the Delta, and it is to a standard comparable to bottled water.

"What you put in you can take out," he said. "It's a one-for-one water recycling program."

Local resident Kuldeep Dhatt was at the groundbreaking to voice her concern for her property. Dhatt owns a vineyard and home directly next to the future wastewater treatment plant and said she was concerned with noise levels and possible odors.

She said she was worried about the value of her property being lowered due to the plant.

"Is it going to ruin my piece of heaven?" she asked.

Contact reporter [Jordan Guinn](mailto:jordang@lodinews.com) at jordang@lodinews.com.

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