



SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

FLOOD CONTROL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

P. O. BOX 1810

STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA, 95201

TELEPHONE (209) 468-3000

FAX NO. (209) 468-2999

KRIS BALAJI
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS

ADVISORY WATER COMMISSION

July 19, 2017, 1:00 p.m.

Public Health Conference Room, 1601 E. Hazelton Avenue, Stockton, California

AGENDA

I. Roll Call

II. Approve Minutes for the Meeting of June 21, 2017

III. Discussion/Action Items:

- A. Coordination Between SJAFCA and San Joaquin County on Funding of Flood Protection Programs – John Maguire
- B. Funding Flood Projects with State Funds after Senate Bill 5 – 200-Year Protection Requirements – Roger Churchwell
- C. Pending Grant Applications and Recent Awards – John Maguire
- D. Status and Future of Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) – Brandon Nakagawa
- E. Summary of Responses to Survey to Advisory Water Commission Regarding Items to Work on for Recommendation to Board of Supervisors – Brandon Nakagawa

IV. Informational Items (See Attached):

- A. June 7, 2017, San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors Letter of Support, “H.R. 434, The New Water Act – Support”
- B. June 22, 2017, Bay-Delta Fish and Wildlife Office, “Questions and Answers on California WaterFix Biological Opinion”
- C. July 1, 2017, sfchronicle.com, “Costly Approval Doesn’t Guarantee the Governor’s Delta Tunnels”
- D. July 5, 2017, recordnet.com, “More Details as Twin Tunnels Decision Nears”
- E. July 5, 2017, redgreenandblue.org, “LA Ratepayers Will Pay for Jerry Brown’s Delta Tunnels (But Big Agriculture Gets All the Water)”
- F. July 6, 2017, Delta Counties Coalition Letter to The Honorable David Valadao opposing H.R. 23, “Gaining Responsibility on Water Act,” unless amended

V. Public Comment:

VI. Commissioners’ Comments:

VII. Adjournment:

Next Regular Meeting
August 16, 2017, 1:00 p.m.
Public Health Conference Room

Commission may make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on any listed item.

If you need disability-related modification or accommodation in order to participate in this meeting, please contact the Water Resources Staff at (209) 468-3089 at least 48 hours prior to the start of the meeting. Any materials related to items on this agenda distributed to the Commissioners less than 72 hours before the public meeting are available for public inspection at Public Works Dept. Offices located at the following address: 1810 East Hazelton Ave., Stockton, CA 95205. These materials are also available at <http://www.sjwater.org>. Upon request these materials may be made available in an alternative format to persons with disabilities.

**REPORT FOR THE MEETING OF
THE ADVISORY WATER COMMISSION OF THE SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY
FLOOD CONTROL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
June 21, 2017**

The regular meeting of the Advisory Water Commission of the San Joaquin County Flood Control and Water Conservation District was held on Wednesday, June 21, 2017, beginning at 1:00 p.m., at Public Health Services, 1601 E. Hazelton Avenue, Stockton, California.

I. Roll Call

Present were Commissioners Nomellini, Murken, de Graaf, Holman, Flinn, Winn, Hartmann, Meyers, Alternates Richle, Houghton, Reyna-Hiestand, Heberle, Secretary Nakagawa, Vice-Chair Price, and Chairman McGurk.

Others present are listed on the Attendance Sheet. The Commission had a quorum.

II. Approval of Minutes for the Meeting of May 17, 2017.

Motion and second to approve the minutes of May 17, 2017 (Meyers/Flinn). Unanimously approved.

SCHEDULED ITEMS

Tom McGurk, Chairman of the Advisory Water Commission (AWC), led the agenda.

III. Discussion / Action Items:

A. H.R.23 “Gaining Responsibility on Water Act of 2017” – Brandon Nakagawa

Mr. Brandon Nakagawa gave an overview of House of Representatives (H.R.) 23 – a federal bill introduced by Congressman David Valadao. H.R. 23 seeks to preempt any federal or state laws and proceed without regard to any other law pertaining to the operation of the Central Valley Project and the California State Water Project. Should this occur, the potential implication is the defragging of Delta water rights and water quality, and it would also raise environmental concerns regarding the overall health of the Delta ecosystem. This bill also seeks to preempt State law, such as the Public Trust Doctrine. Based on Staff’s analysis as well as the County’s legislative platform, Mr. Nakagawa stated it seems likely that the County will seek to oppose this bill given its positions on the Delta, on the Twin Tunnels Project, the Central Valley Project, the State Water Project, water rights, and/or operations.

H.R. 23 could go before the House of Representatives by mid-July. Therefore, the Staff recommendation is that the Advisory Water Commission recommend to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to oppose H.R. 23, as written. However, he also suggests a commitment to find and support the good qualities contained in the bill.

Discussion amongst the Commission concluded H.R. 23 would remove impediments from the operations of the Twin Tunnels Project. Congressman Jeff Denham was not a sponsor on the original version of H.R. 23 dated January 3rd, but is now a cosponsor.

MOTION: Commissioner Flinn moved and Commissioner Hartmann seconded a motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to oppose H.R. 23, unless amended. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Presidential 2017 Winter Storm Disaster – Michael Cockrell

Mr. Michael Cockrell, Director – San Joaquin County Office of Emergency Services (OES), gave an update of the 2017 winter storms, which were governor-proclaimed, locally-proclaimed, and presidentially-declared.

Probability of El Niño returning has reduced to 40-45%, or a neutral condition at 55%. These are early projections with more definitive probabilities in August-September. Additional projections include a 50% probability of warmer temperatures, and precipitation at normal range. Per the Climate Environmental Retrieval and Archive (CERA) Index, rainfall measured average in April, below in May, and low in June. The San Joaquin Precipitation: 5-Station Index measured 182% of average as of June 20, 2017.

The Snow Water Content for the Central Sierra measured 31% of average as of June 16, 2017. A current issue concerns the Milton / Friant area and the rapid snow melt. Mr. Cockrell commented on reservoir conditions including New Melones Lake encroached at +29 Thousand Acre Feet (TAF), while other reservoirs in the Central Valley measure just under encroachment. Overall projected total increase into San Joaquin River will be approximately 500 cubic feet per second. As of June 22, 2017, peak snowpack runoff flows at Vernalis will measure 21.8" and Newman will be classified at "monitor" stage.

Numerous Reclamation Districts have submitted requests for Public Law (PL) 84-99 to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) for emergency levee work. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has confirmed all levee threat assessments, thereby the Corps is accepting letters of application for levee rehabilitation until the July 15, 2017 deadline.

Due to debris and threat, some river closures are still in place along the lower stretch of the San Joaquin River, and Paradise Cut over to Fabian Tract. All levee access controls have been removed, now allowing public access. Inspections conclude there are no new boils and/or seepages, and 24-hour levee patrols have been discontinued. The six levee breaks along the Mokelumne occurred in agricultural areas, with repair of one levee breach to begin. Weekly coordination meetings with levee agencies, the Corps, DWR, and the Bureau of Reclamation continue.

Mr. Cockrell concluded his presentation and discussion was open.

Discussion was held amongst the Commission about quantifying amounts of uncaptured and captured water as well as water recharge. It was noted that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) states there is up to \$1 billion in hazard mitigation grant funds.

Commissioner Hartmann asked for clarification of an exemption offered to farmers and landowners to remove fallen trees and debris in areas without governance. Mr. Cockrell explained that the BOS Chairman had declared a local emergency which allowed immunity from certain liabilities of cleanup actions, and fish and game enforcement agencies tend to relax regulations during local emergencies. Public Works provided links to local ordinances and guidance of how and when property owners can take action without suffering consequences. Mr. Kris Balaji, San Joaquin

County Public Works – Director, added this information has been presented to landowners at public forums and via email, but the offer has not been utilized and the window of opportunity is closing.

Mr. Balaji stated this exemption is not a “free pass” and entails reporting requirements.

Ms. Julianne Phillips, San Joaquin Farm Bureau (SJFB), commented that she is aware of areas in the north County where uncontrolled streams and unmaintained channels have been problematic. She offered to provide OES with a link for an email blast to reach SJFB members. Ms. Phillips expressed opinion there may be a sense of confusion of accountability whereby a breakdown of criteria and responsibility would be helpful.

Commissioner Winn inquired on the current water conservation levels and plans to ease up on some restrictions (i.e., water days). Mr. Fritz Buchman, San Joaquin County Public Works – Deputy Director, noted that the Spring 2017 Groundwater Monitoring data may reflect conservation changes. Mr. Cockrell added that the State Water Resources Control Board is developing the final regulatory restrictions for making drought conservation a way of life in California.

C. Lower San Joaquin River Feasibility Study Update – Roger Churchwell

Mr. Roger Churchwell, San Joaquin Area Flood Control Agency (SJAFCA) – Deputy Executive Director, gave an update on progress of the Lower San Joaquin River Feasibility Study, which he previously presented to the Commission at the AWC meeting held March 15, 2017. The study had been on a hold status due to financial constraints while the Corps sought funding in the amount of \$200,000. The Corps was awarded the funds through the 2017 Work Plan, and work on the study has resumed. SJAFCA has contributed its share of funds, and the State will go before its Board to seek funds for their contribution to the project. The Civil Works Review Board is scheduled for November 2017, and the Chief’s Report is due in March 2018. Hopefully, approval to advance to the next steps of the study will be received following the Chief’s Report. The study was started in March 2009.

The study is currently in the “planning” stage and the next phase will be funding and design. Mr. Churchwell commented on the large scale of this project and work would be done in phases. He estimates approximately three years for design of the project, followed by funding for construction, with “best case scenario” of ten years to begin construction. If the Corps funds construction of the project, local and state financial share contribution would be lowered. If government funded, the costs are usually higher and the schedule is longer. He added that funding for this large project cannot be raised on a local level (i.e., via assessments).

The project encompasses a large area and involves multiple floodplains, both which pose challenges. Per Proposition 218 funding requirements, areas must benefit from projects. Strategy of the project is to section areas, prioritize each area by need of flood protection, followed by funding. In addition, Senate Bill 5 puts restrictions on development and it is beneficial to seek higher levels of protection.

D. Spring 2017 Groundwater Monitoring Report – Gerardo Dominguez

Mr. Gerardo Dominguez, P.E., San Joaquin County Public Works – Engineer IV, presented the Semi-Annual Groundwater Monitoring Program Report for Spring 2017. Well inspections were conducted and data collected for two weeks in March 2017. Groundwater monitoring began in 1971 with cooperation from California Water Service Company, East Bay Municipal Utilities District, DWR, the City of Lodi, and the City of Tracy. A total of 500 wells were monitored, with data collected by the County from approximately 250 wells. Obstacles encountered during monitoring

were dogs, bees, deconstructed wells, and inaccessibility to flooded fields at or near the well. The groundwater report is divided into two sections: 1) Rainfall Distribution, and 2) Groundwater Elevation Monitoring.

1. Rainfall Distribution – Groundwater levels increased due to the recent rain season. This resulted in less groundwater pumping, cooler temperatures and less evaporation. Rainfall measurements for the Lodi Station reflect the third highest levels since 1949. The Stockton Fire Station data reflects above average rainfall. The Camp Pardee Station reflected the wettest year since 1949, with 43 inches of rainfall.
2. Groundwater Elevation Monitoring – Groundwater elevations varied with some areas experiencing considerable increases. Since Spring 2016, some elevation measurements presented include: Woodbridge Irrigation District (WID) measured 10-feet higher; Central San Joaquin Water Conservation District (CSJWCD) measured 5-feet lower; and South San Joaquin Irrigation District (SSJID) measurements remained at neutral elevations. Groundwater elevations increased an average of 3.28 feet, with the level of accuracy within 0.5 feet.

Slides were displayed showing comparisons in groundwater elevations from Spring 2016 to Spring 2017. Red symbols reflected decreases, blue symbols reflected increases, and green symbols reflected no change. CSJWCD areas depicted decreases, Stockton East Water District areas depicted increases, and SSJID areas depicted both increases and decreases in certain areas monitored. The Cone of Depression (aka “The Hole”) elevation measured -70 in Spring 2016, and measured -60 in Spring 2017. Cross sections of groundwater elevation contours reflected: Hwy 99 to Brandt Road – The Hole filled in; Hwy 99 from South County to North County – The Hole filled in along City of Stockton to Lodi; and Hwy 26 to Fresno Avenue – The Hole filled in SEWD areas.

Mr. Dominguez concluded it was a good year for groundwater levels. He added recharge levels will likely go up in October due to less pumping. Latency of measurements vary, but response is rapid. Mr. Nakagawa interjected that groundwater levels being seen are a response to not pumping, standing water, and surface water levels and are not the direct result of recharge occurring. A study conducted of surface water percolating down to a nearby well concluded the recharge process could take 100-120 days up to 20,000 years.

On a separate topic, Mr. Balaji commended Mr. Dominguez on his commitment to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) boundary issues and GIS mapping.

E. Flood and Water Projects – Open Forum

Mr. Nakagawa referenced discussion from the AWC meeting held May 17, 2017 regarding “harnessing the horsepower” of the Commission and directing it towards challenges, programs, or projects. Some topics to consider may include SGMA related issues (i.e., governance and the Joint Powers Authority—JPA), big water projects (i.e., dams and reservoirs), or flood projects.

Commissioner Hartmann inquired about the “ground rules” and added that AWC exists to serve the San Joaquin County BOS as its public forum to assist in developing policy. That said, how would action taken by the Commission translate to the JPA? Mr. Nakagawa responded the BOS is a member of the JPA, and County is staff to both the AWC and the new JPA.

Commissioner Hartmann addressed Commissioner Winn asking for his opinion from the perspective of a County Supervisor. Commissioner Winn commented that the AWC should not

underestimate their influence or “horse power” as the Commission consists of a broad spectrum of agencies that address water issues. He added that from a Board of Supervisors perspective, there is value in the AWC’s collective backgrounds and experiences and that can be leveraged to gain knowledge from the past and apply it today. The BOS is in agreement with a lot of projects throughout the State (e.g., Temperance Flat) and is supportive of projects that will reduce the need for Delta water (e.g., Sites Reservoir and raising San Luis Reservoir). He added that San Joaquin is uniquely positioned and amongst the Delta, the mountain counties, and agriculture. The AWC has the opportunity to establish a vision and work with various entities. Commissioner Hartmann expressed opinion that the nature of the AWC cannot be to self-actualize. He feels this Commission responds well to requests and recommendations from the County. Commissioner Winn replied, “We serve each other.”

Commissioner Winn commented on the Delta Counties Coalition (DCC) which consists of five diverse counties with a diversity of water solutions. He suggested that as the AWC moves forward with proposing future projects, they might consider collaborating with the four other counties in the DCC and to work on mutual interests such as water capture, reverse flows, or desalination plants.

Vice-Chair Price commented that the Commission has fought to remain passive and reactive, not self-starting or active on water issues. He asked, “Can the AWC initiate ideas?” Commissioner Winn responded that all the agencies comprising the AWC have their own Boards and staff. He suggested the individual agencies work on ideas, or perhaps the AWC hold a workshop to discuss potential projects. He added there are a lot of other projects to consider that are more affordable and more efficient than the Twin Tunnels.

Commissioner McGurk inquired about the funding for proposed projects and asked whether the County would co-sponsor projects. Commissioner Winn does not condone higher taxes, but referenced funds from Measure K and the \$55 million it generates annually. He stated that, should funding be made available, the typically required matching funds should be in place. Commissioner Nomellini stated benefit areas need to be designated to generate revenue for a particular project. He added that funding is, or will also be, needed for SGMA, SJAFCA, and the Flood Control District.

Commissioner Hartmann referenced SGMA and the newly formed JPA, with its limited life-span of less than three years to approve a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). He stated the inevitable to build infrastructure for water storage and feels this is a high priority project to achieve sustainability in compliance with SGMA. The challenge will be funding.

Vast discussion continued amongst the Commission about projects and funding. In conclusion – Mr. Nakagawa will email the Commission to solicit for three proactive ideas or projects to recommend to the Board of Supervisors.

Commissioner Hartmann acknowledged Public Works staff on their continued hard work, and commended Michael Cockrell and OES staff, and the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors.

IV. Informational Items:

- A. June 6, 2017, iodinews.com, “Fish and Wildlife Accepting Proposals for Grant Programs”**
- B. June 8, 2017, circleofblue.org, “California Hones Drinking Water Affordability Plan”**

- C. June 12, 2017, sfchronicle.com, “12 Dead This Season in Torrential Sierra Snow Melt, Yosemite’s Merced, Other CA Rivers Dangerous”**
- D. June 13, 2017, sacbee.com, “Why Years of Waiting May Be Over on Delta Tunnels”**
- E. June 13, 2017, Delta Counties Coalition Letter of Support of Assembly Bill 732 (Frazier), Delta Levee Maintenance (as Amended on May 23, 2017)**
- F. June 15, 2017, Delta Counties Coalition Letter to Mr. John Watts, Office of Senator Dianne Feinstein**

V. Public Comment:

VI. Commissioners’ Comments:

Next Regular Meeting: July 19, 2017, at 1:00 p.m.
Public Health Conference Room

Adjournment: 2:55 p.m.



SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY
FLOOD CONTROL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

ADVISORY WATER COMMISSION
MEETING OF JUNE 21, 2017

ATTENDANCE SHEET

NAME	AFFILIATION	E-MAIL ADDRESS	PHONE
DANIELE BARNY	SJC PW-WR	dbarny@sjgov.org	468-3089
Fritz Buchman	" "		
Andrew Bichle	City of Lodi	arichle@lodi.gov	333-6878
KEMSSA KAMUEREZ	AVOC-ATLARGE		
ANNETTE HENNEBERRY SCHERMESSER		zmooncoin@att.net	839 1101
Michael R. Cockrill	SJC OES	mcockrill@sjgov.org	953-6208
Gerardo Dominguez	SJC PW	gdominguez@sjgov.org	953-7948
Dave Peterson	PBI	dpeterson@pbicq.com	916-792-6285
Roger Churchill	SJAFCP	rogerchurchill@stockton	209-373-8484
REGINA RUBIER	CITY OF STOCKTON	REGINA.RUBIER@STOCKTON	937-8782
Rpd Estrada	SJC EHD	restrada@sjcehd.com	468-0331
Juianne Phillips	SJFB	jphillips@sjfb.org	931-4931
SCOT MOODY	SEWD		
Michael Callahan	SJC PW	mcallahan@sjgov.org	468-9360
Brent Williams	stake holder	Sam	
Kelly Vallalparado	SJC-BW-WR	KRVillalparado@sjgov.org	468-3073
Mark Houghton	City of Manteca	MHOUGHTON@CI.MANTECA.CA.US	456-8400
Andrew Bichle	City of Lodi	arichle@lodi.gov	333-6878
Stephanie Reyna-Hiestand	City of Tracy	stephanie.hiestand@cityoftracy.org	(209) 831-6333
Daniel de Graaf	City of Ripon	ddegraaf@cityofripon.org	
Drew Maykas	Rec Dist	CDRUSW9057E@AOL.com	
Walter Muehlen	City of Escalon	wmuehlen@cityofescalon.org	(209) 380-2090
TOM MCGURK	S.E.W.D.		
Will Spive	AT Large	James	
George Grahman	RO2014/2030	gublan@gmail.com	9569940

ATTACHMENTS

IV



SAN JOAQUIN
— COUNTY —
Greatness grows here.

Board of Supervisors

Chuck Winn, Chair, Fourth District

Miguel Villapudua, Vice-Chair, First District

Katherine Miller, Second District

Tom Patti, Third District

Bob Elliott, Fifth District

Mimi Duzenski, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

June 7, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Denham
United States House of Representatives
1730 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

SUBJECT: H.R. 434, THE NEW WATER ACT - SUPPORT

Dear Congressman Denham:

On behalf of the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to convey our support for H.R. 434, the New Water Act. The New Water Act would provide local government agencies with access to low-cost, long-term financing for much needed water infrastructure investments, including surface water and groundwater storage projects as well as other water management improvement projects. The program would provide project sponsors with access to Federally-backed loans and could drive down annual debt service on monies borrowed from more traditional financing sources.

The County respectfully requests that you consider amending the Bill at the appropriate time in the legislative process to include language requiring that any Federal assistance under the Bill in California is made available consistent with Proposition 1, the 2014 California Water Bond. As you know, Proposition 1 bars the use of any water bond proceeds from being used to "pay the costs of the design, construction, operation, mitigation or maintenance of Delta conveyance facilities." As stated in the text of the Proposition, these "costs shall be the responsibility of the water agencies that benefit from the design, construction, operation, mitigation or maintenance of those facilities." Including such language in the Bill would provide an added level of certainty that Federal assistance under H.R. 434 would not be available to support the Twin Tunnels.

We believe the financing tools authorized in the Bill represent an important step forward in efforts to help make our region, our State, and the Western United States as a whole more drought resilient at relatively little cost to the United States Treasury. Thank you for authoring this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Winn".

CHUCK WINN
Chairman, Board of Supervisors

CW:BN:nt
06-07-17 HR 434 V2 SUPPORT

c: San Joaquin County Congressional Delegation
San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors
Monica Nino, County Administrator
Kris Balaji, Director of Public Works

Questions and Answers on California WaterFix Biological Opinion

Q: What is the California WaterFix project?

A: California WaterFix is an infrastructure project that would include constructing two tunnels to convey water from the north to the south Delta. The purpose of WaterFix is to modernize water infrastructure and provide a secure and reliable source of water to meet the needs of farmers and communities, while including measures to address the needs of fish and wildlife.

Q: Why was the Biological Opinion prepared?

A: The Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires federal agencies to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that its actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species or destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat. The biological opinion provides the opinion of the Service, based on the best available science, as to whether or not a proposal is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat. The Service analyzed the effects of the California WaterFix on 16 listed species.

Q: What does the biological opinion cover?

A: The Biological Opinion provides broad-scale evaluation of the California WaterFix program to ensure that the basic goals and approaches of the program do not jeopardize the survival or recovery of listed species or adversely modify critical habitat. Some of the project elements are still in development and will require additional consultation with the Service in the future. Those elements that will require a subsequent Biological Opinion include construction of the diversion structures in the North Delta and operations of those new diversion structures and existing Central Valley Project and State Water Project pumping plans under dual conveyance. Elements that do not require a subsequent Biological Opinion include construction of the tunnels, expansions and modifications of Clifton Court Forebay and certain mitigation actions.

Q: Does the California WaterFix Biological Opinion conclude that the project would jeopardize any listed species?

A: We concluded that the project is not likely to result in jeopardizing listed species under our jurisdiction in the Biological Opinion.

Q: What is Jeopardy?

A: The Service's analysis of the effects of the project is measured against the definition of jeopardy. Under the ESA, jeopardy occurs when an action is reasonably expected, directly or indirectly, to diminish a species' numbers, reproduction, or distribution so that the likelihood of survival and recovery in the wild is appreciably reduced.

Q: Why didn't you find that the WaterFix project would jeopardize any listed species?

A: The conclusions in the Biological Opinion were reached after an extensive review the current status of our listed species, anticipated effects of the activities being proposed, and the cumulative effects, we concluded that the project is not likely result in jeopardizing listed species under our jurisdiction in the Biological Opinion.

Q: What is critical habitat?

A: When a species listed under the Endangered Species Act, we often identify areas of habitat believed to be essential to the species' conservation. Those areas may be officially designated as critical habitat and afforded some protections under the Endangered Species Act.

Q: What does it mean to destroy or adversely modify critical habitat?

A: Destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat is defined as direct or indirect alteration that appreciably diminishes the value of critical habitat for the conservation of a listed species.

Q: Does the WaterFix Biological Opinion conclude that the project would destroy or adversely modify critical habitat?

A: We concluded that the project is not likely to result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat for species under our jurisdiction in the Biological Opinion.

Q: Is the Biological Opinion from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service our final involvement in the construction and operation of the California WaterFix project?

The issuance of the Biological Opinion is not the end point of our involvement. There will be a number of additional opportunities and requirements where listed species protections will be addressed. Some elements of the proposal that will be subject to future more specific consultations because they require additional federal approvals later in time. Other elements of the project are fully evaluated for implementation with no additional consultation required. U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the California Department of Water Resources have committed to further address species effects from California WaterFix operations in tandem with the existing pumping facilities in the South Delta in a future consultation.

In addition, requirements to further consult with us in the event the project is going to change from what we evaluated or additional impacts are identified additional consultation may be required.

Bay-Delta Fish and Wildlife Office
650 Capitol Mall, 8th Floor
Room 8-300
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone (916) 930-5603
Last updated June 22, 2017



Costly approval doesn't guarantee the governor's delta tunnels

San Francisco Chronicle | July 1, 2017 | Updated: July 2, 2017 3:34pm



1



Photo: Rich Pedroncelli, Associated Press



FILE - In this Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016, file photo, people try to catch fish along the Sacramento River in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, near Courtland, Calif.



Legislature must focus on the big picture for climate change



California AG stacks the deck on gas-tax measure



What Trump and company have been hiding



farms.

It's a regrettable step in a long, costly and politically charged approval process with an uncertain outcome. It doesn't make sense to spend \$17 billion to move water instead of investing in water saving and reuse.

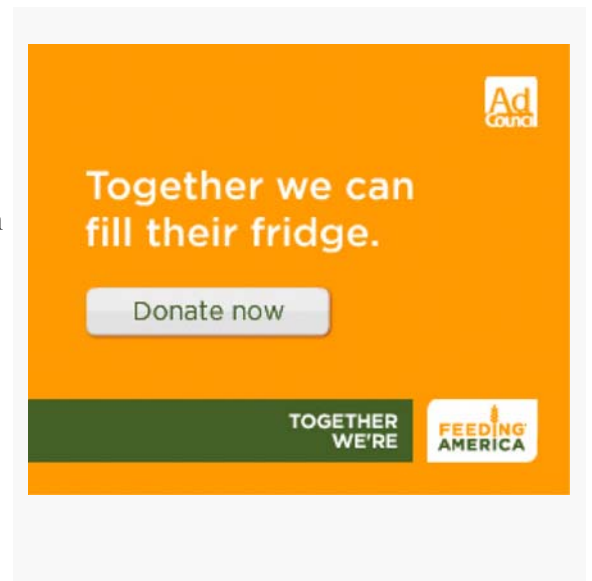
Within 72 hours, environmental groups and fishing interests sued, saying the agencies are failing to protect native salmon and allowing the river to degrade further.

An earlier draft of the biologic opinion suggested the 35-mile-long tunnels would harm endangered native species. The state's offer to restore 1,800 acres (in addition to the 30,000 acres already planned) of delta wetland habitat apparently swayed the federal agencies. The opinion notes the tunnels won't "further harm" the delta smelt (which are nearly extinct) and the endangered winter-run Chinook salmon.

Federal approval of a step toward an enormous water project just days after the Trump administration rolled out "infrastructure week" probably should come as no surprise.

The state says the project will restore the natural flows in the delta where the powerful state and federal pumps reverse the river and suck in the endangered fish. By law, the pumps must shut down if too many smelt are killed, making water delivery unreliable.

The State Water Contractors, who will pay to construct the four-story high tunnels, applauded: "This is a major step toward reaching a final consensus on the project. We've known for 60 years that we need to construct alternative conveyance in the delta." The contractors' customers, who would see their bills rise, should be less thrilled — along with Californians who appreciate the economic and environmental value of a healthy habitat for fish.



HEARST newspapers

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More details as Twin Tunnels decision nears

By The Record

Posted Jul 5, 2017 at 7:50 PM

Updated Jul 5, 2017 at 7:50 PM

A giant Southern California water district that could decide whether to invest in the Delta tunnels as soon as September has released the **first of three “white papers”** which are expected to address some unresolved issues.

Among other things, this latest document from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California describes the new **joint powers authority** that might be formed to oversee construction of the 40-foot-wide tunnels.

The tunnels are a state project, but the Department of Water Resources is busy with the reconstruction of the Oroville Dam spillway after this year’s flooding, the white paper notes.

“Recognizing DWR staff resources are stretched to an extreme level due to the necessary commitment to complete significant repairs to the Oroville Reservoir spillways ... there is a need to employ different but proven approaches to pool resources for the design and construction of California WaterFix,” as the tunnels are formally known, the document says.

Forming a joint powers authority would give water contractors who stand to benefit from the tunnels more involvement in how they are built. This is controversial, though the white paper notes that Water

Resources would retain some oversight.

The public joint powers authority would include an executive director and a board of directors. A staff would be hired, complete with engineers, accountants, auditors, public relations experts and attorneys, among others.

If problems occur during the lengthy construction period, some changes to the project would have to be approved by the state while others wouldn't. Anything more than a 5 percent increase in budget for a major component, for example, would require state approval.

The joint powers authority would have to provide monthly and yearly reports on its progress. The tunnels would be turned over to the state once they're finished, and the authority would cease to exist.

Other highlights:

- The white paper also sheds more light on the timeline for construction. Metropolitan assumes that construction won't begin until three years after the project is authorized, which could happen in the coming months. That would mean construction wouldn't begin until 2020. It would then take about 13 years to build the entire project, stretching into the 2030s.
- Metropolitan's paper also places the cost of the tunnels at \$15.7 billion. State officials last week estimated \$17.1 billion, but Metropolitan clarified on Wednesday that the state's estimate includes \$1.4 billion to operate the tunnels over a period of 50 years.
- The white paper notes that Metropolitan has a "75 percent confidence level that the project would be completed within the budget estimate," though the design for the project is only 5 percent to 10 percent complete.

- Finally, the white paper notes that more studies are needed of soil conditions within the Delta. Some Delta property owners fought the state's efforts to drill for soil samples in recent years, but the farmers ultimately lost at the state Supreme Court.

The white paper acknowledges that while 240 drill tests already have been conducted, there are gaps of several miles along the alignment of the tunnels.

“Up to 2,000 additional investigations would be conducted,” the paper says.

The third and final white paper, expected later this summer, will address who pays how much, one of the major remaining issues to be dealt with before the tunnels can move forward.

READ NEXT

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Posted at 9:54 AM

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Half a million Medicare recipients wei

Posted at 9:30 AM



LA ratepayers will pay for Jerry Brown's Delta Tunnels (but big agriculture gets all the water)

 Published on July 5th, 2017



TAGGED: [CALIFORNIA WATER WARS](#), [CALIFORNIA WATERFIX](#), [DELTA TUNNELS](#), [JERRY BROWN](#), [WATERFIX](#)

One of the most enduring myths of California water politics is that the Delta Tunnels promoted by the Jerry Brown and Donald Trump administrations are designed to divert Northern California water to “fill swimming pools” of “wealthy water wasters” in Southern California.

By Dan Bacher

One of the most enduring myths of California water politics is that the Delta Tunnels promoted by the Jerry Brown and Donald Trump administrations are designed to divert Northern California water to “fill swimming pools” of “wealthy water wasters” in Southern California.

In reality, 80 percent of northern California water exported south of the Delta goes to irrigate agribusiness operations in the Central Valley, while the rest goes to urban and industrial users, including those in Southern California who have made many successful efforts to reduce water use and recycle water.



The controversy over the Delta Tunnels, also known as the California WaterFix, is not one between Northern California and Southern California. It is fact a battle between the people of the California, including Southern California water ratepayers who oppose the project for an array of reasons, and the corporate agribusiness interests, rich water barons and brokers, and the Trump and Brown administrations, who are pushing for the construction of the two giant 35-mile long water tunnels under the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

Countering the false “Northern versus Southern California” narrative, a coalition of environmental justice and social justice groups from throughout the Los Angeles area on July 29 exposed how rising water rates have resulted in alarming number of shutoffs to low income water users — and how the Delta Tunnels will only make things worse by raising water water rates.

Food & Water Watch, Union de Vecinos, Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, POWER, the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water and other community groups released information showing that 20,000 Los Angeles County households experienced water shutoffs over the last two years in the cities of Los Angeles, Long Beach, and South Gate.

The groups claim that water shutoffs “are a symptom of how unaffordable L.A. County has become and part of a bigger crisis of livability in the area.”

“The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power shut off service to 9,105 households in 2015 and 2016,” according to a statement from the groups. “In the same period, Long Beach shut off water to 5,284 households and the town of South Gate, a predominantly a low-income, Latino community, shut off 5,850 households. Together the three cities cut water service to more than 20,000 households, affecting an estimated 65,000 people”.

The groups said these water agencies could soon subject their customers to additional rate hikes to pay for Governor Brown’s Delta Tunnels, a multi-billion dollar project that would force higher water rates throughout Southern California.

Research by EcoNorthwest reveals that the average LADWP customer would see their water bills rise up to \$393 annually. San Joaquin Valley Central Valley agribusiness interests, including The Wonderful Company owned by Beverly Hills billionaires Stewart and Lynda Resnick, would primarily benefit, while Southern Californians would get no additional water.

“Low income families are struggling to survive in Los Angeles and cannot afford to be subjected to additional rate increases to subsidize billionaire corporate farmers,” said Leo Vilchis of Union de Vecinos.

Water advocates say that instead of investing in the tunnels—the most expensive and environmentally destructive water project in the state’s history— the City and County of Los Angeles “should shore up aging infrastructure.”

“Los Angeles and other cities should reject the Delta tunnels as a waste of public money at a time when we need to invest locally to fix our crumbling water system,” said Brenna Norton, Senior Organizer with Food & Water Watch. “Mayor Garcetti should direct LADWP to clean up and increase our local water supply, thereby creating local jobs, not invest in the tunnels boondoggle.”

She said labor advocates worry that the city could “squander the opportunity” to create good, local jobs creating rainwater capture systems and other local water projects.

SEIU Local 721, the union that represents Southern California public service workers, recently voiced its opposition to the Delta Tunnels.

“More and more families throughout the country are struggling to pay their water bills,” Norton pointed out. “A recent Michigan State University study found that over the next five years, more than a third of households nationwide could be unable to afford this essential service.”

“Because fewer federal dollars are available to support municipal water systems, household bills are growing to pay for improvements and repairs. Water rights advocates have raised concerns that municipal water services will be privatized under the Trump administration’s coming infrastructure plan, exacerbating the growing water affordability dilemmas nationwide,” she explained.

Norton, Vilchis and other water rights advocates called on Mayors Garcetti and Garcia and city council members in the region to take a strong stand against local water shut offs and oppose the tunnels project.

Food & Water Watch published a [detailed article](#) by Mary Grant analyzing the water shuts offs, the cost of the tunnels to Southern California, and “policy suggestions utilities can implement to ensure no one has to gets their water shut off.”

“While the state estimates that construction costs will be about \$16 billion, [the final cost of project including financing could reach \\$67 billion](#). Even in the best-case scenario, a University of the Pacific professor, Dr. Jeffrey Michael, has found that [the project will provide only 39 cents of benefit for every dollar of cost](#),” Grant wrote.

The 38 members of the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) of Southern California’s Board of Directors are scheduled to vote on the WaterFix this September, according to Grant. These members represent 26 different local governments and water agencies, including the city of Los Angeles, the city of Long Beach and the Central Basin Municipal Water District, which provides water to South Gate.


As I predicted on election night, the Trump and Brown administrations have apparently made a deal to fast-track Brown’s legacy project, the Delta Tunnels.

On June 26, the Trump administration released a no-jeopardy finding on the biological assessment to build the tunnels, claiming that the California WaterFix will not jeopardize threatened or endangered species or adversely modify their critical habitat. The biological opinion is available

here: <https://www.fws.gov/sfbaydelta/HabitatConservation/CalWaterFix/Index.htm>

On June 29, fishing and environmental groups responded by [filing two lawsuits challenging the Trump administration's biological opinions permitting the construction of the controversial Delta Tunnels project.](#)

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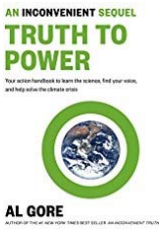
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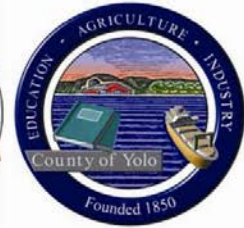
Jerry Brown promises resistance to Trump (but wants money for his delta tunnels boondoggle) In "California Water Wars"



Boom! Local and national groups sue to block water-stealing Delta Tunnels In "California Water Wars"

0 Comments    





Delta Counties Coalition

Contra Costa County · Sacramento County · San Joaquin County · Solano County · Yolo County

"Working together on water and Delta issues"

July 6, 2017

The Honorable David Valadao
United States House of Representatives
1728 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Valadao:

The Delta Counties Coalition (DCC) appreciates your efforts to develop federal policies that will help grow the State's water supply and provide water security for our communities. Upon review of your H.R. 23, "Gaining Responsibility on Water Act," we have serious reservations as the bill would undermine existing protections of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta). As currently constructed, the DCC opposes H.R. 23 unless amended.

The DCC strongly opposes Section 108, which mandates the operation of the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project to the water quality and operational constraints of the 1994 Bay-Delta Accord, regardless of the requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) or any other law. Waiving the ESA, the Clean Water Act, or any other law to benefit one group of water users at the expense of the Delta and other water users is unacceptable.

California's drastic volatility in precipitation, which includes historic flooding and multi-year drought, demonstrates the urgent need to develop a shared solution to the problems of an inadequate State water supply, poor Delta water quality, and a threatened Delta ecosystem. We support efforts to develop and implement a comprehensive water-management plan that produces performance based, multiple-benefit projects that will benefit the State as a whole, including projects to expand water supplies, improve the management of existing water resources, protect the Delta levees, restore environmental habitat in the Delta as well as upstream and downstream of the Delta, and help meet the State's clean water goals in both the near- and long-term.

Given our understanding of the Delta region and the water challenges in the State, we are confident that the DCC can help forge statewide solutions for a more drought resilient water supply. The DCC supports Federal legislation that fully and fairly reflects the Delta's role in meeting legitimate needs around the State and that seeks to protect and improve the Delta

The Honorable David Valadao

July 6, 2017

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consistent with the coequal goals in the State's Delta Reform Act of 2009. Only then can the Delta's vital resources, important to both the Delta region's residents and the entire State, be assured.

Sincerely,



Don Nottoli
Supervisor, Sacramento County



Skip Thomson
Supervisor, Solano County



Karen Mitchoff
Supervisor, Contra Costa County



Jim Provenza
Supervisor, Yolo County



Chuck Winn
Supervisor, San Joaquin County

cc: DCC Federal Delegation