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August 13, 2015

**Secretary Sally Jewell  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20240**

cc: President Barack Obama

**Subject: DVD of Public Comments Regarding Opposition to the Delta Tunnels/California Water Fix (Alternative 4A)**

Dear Secretary Jewel,

Enclosed is a video made by Restore the Delta for you and President Obama. Restore the Delta, a grassroots organization of 25,000 members, advocates for restoring the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary for our children and future generations. It is our hope that by watching the video you will see and hear what people from our region and throughout the state think about the project.

The revised draft EIR/EIS for California Water Fix stated in its executive summary that two public hearings would be held regarding the proposed Delta tunnels project. These hearings, however, were transformed by California state officials into public house events, held science fair style with boards and table displays. This format did not allow for public comments or questions to be addressed in a transparent manner. Even more disturbing, Delta residents were given answers to questions by project consultants regarding water quality and quantity for export through the tunnels that completely contradicts our findings in the DEIR/DEIS and in a presentation given the same day by staff at the Metropolitan Water District in Los Angeles. Officials told our members that there would be no water quality impacts and that no additional water would be taken from the Delta, which contradicts the DEIR/DEIS and the MWD Bay-Delta presentation to its board of July 28, 2015.

You will find in the video that our members understand fully the biological underpinnings of how the estuary functions, and what it needs for successful restoration. Our supporters understand equally the politics behind California water management. Their knowledge of the impacts of the project and their strong opposition is made clear in the video.

The Delta Reform Act of 2009, in which the California State Legislature declared a commitment to the coequal goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California AND protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem in a manner that enhances the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta, cannot be upheld if the Delta Tunnels come to pass.

The Delta Tunnels/California Water Fix does not meet the Delta restoration half of the Act's goals; it is simply a plan to export more water out of the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary. The Delta Tunnels/California Water Fix will also fail to provide a more reliable water supply fifty percent of the time because the Delta watershed will not have enough flow during dry periods.

**Our objections to the tunnels are as follows:**

The California Water Fix does not address the environmental, public health or economic impacts of the proposed Delta tunnels project. Also, the plan ignores alternatives that would save California tax and ratepayers billions of dollars, while investing in the jobs and local water sources that build sustainability.

**Our environmental concerns with the plan are:**

- The impact on wildlife and plant species in the Delta that depend on freshwater include the Delta smelt, chinook salmon, steelhead, San Joaquin kit fox, and tricolored blackbird, protected species already on the brink that will face decimation due to a diminishing food-web.
- At sea, even the ESA-listed South Pacific Puget Sound Orca Whales depend on migrating Delta species that will be harmed by less water flowing through the Delta.
- The tunnels plan seems to ignore Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act which prohibits federal agency actions that are likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or that “result in the destruction or adverse modification of [critical] habitat of [listed] species.”

**Our public health concerns with the plan are:**

- The tunnels will cause increased contamination of municipal water, discharge systems and wells for the millions of rural and urban residents living in the five Delta counties.
- The tunnels plan fails to model for potential increases of carcinogens and other formation of byproducts that would cause cancer and other serious health effects.
- Environmental justice communities who depend on subsistence fishing will also face food and health insecurities as a result of increased contaminants, specifically mercury contamination, in fish and wildlife populations.

**Our economic concerns with the plan are:**

- For large metropolitan cities such as Los Angeles and San Jose that depend on export water, water rates and/or property taxes will go up, but they will get no additional water.
- No analysis has been done on how the lack of fresh water flows will impact San Francisco Bay tourism and recreation. These industries depend on Delta fresh water flows for their crab and salmon fisheries, wildlife sighting, boating, and their restaurant economy. This industry is worth billions annually.
- Salinity intrusion is already impacting the western Delta farms and removing Sacramento River freshwater from the system will make matters worse. Delta farmers cannot irrigate crops with salt water and they certainly cannot plant crops in contaminated soils. The Delta Ag economy, which consists of generations of family farms and farm workers, generates \$5.2 billion for the California economy, annually.
- California coastal fishing communities depend on thriving wildlife. This historic industry is worth billions annually, with the salmon industry worth \$1.5 billion annually alone. Thousands of jobs and livelihoods are tied to these industries.
- The operation and construction of the tunnels will obstruct and disable navigable water ways for boating, marinas and other types of leisure activities, in addition to creating conditions of low water flow that will foster invasive aquatic species, such as water hyacinth. Poor water quality also creates unsafe recreation. Recreation and tourism in the Delta generate \$750 million annually.

### **Alternatives to Water Exports Ignored**

Perhaps our biggest objection to the Delta Tunnels plan is that far less expensive and less environmentally destructive alternatives were largely ignored. The plan does not seriously consider any alternatives other than new, upstream conveyance. The decision-making process (from the outset) has tilted in favor of increasing water exports from the Delta.

### **Our tax and ratepayer dollars would be much better spent on:**

- More aggressive water efficiency program statewide that would apply to both urban and agricultural users.
- Funding water recycling and groundwater recharging projects statewide that would be billions of dollars less expensive for rate payers than constructing a new version of the Peripheral Canal or major new surface storage dams. Meanwhile, these project move communities towards water sustainability.
- Retiring thousands of acres of impaired and pollution generating farmlands in the southern San Joaquin Valley and using those lands for more sustainable and profitable uses, such as solar energy generation.

- Improving Delta levees in order to address potential earthquake, flooding, and future sea level rise concerns at a cost between \$2 to \$4 billion and is orders of-magnitude less expensive than major conveyance projects that are currently being contemplated.
- Increasing freshwater flows through the Delta to reduce pollutants so ecosystems and wildlife can be restored.
- Installing fish screens at the south Delta pumps to reduce the current salvage of marine life.

### **In Summary**

The Delta has problems that need to be addressed, but the CA Water Fix tunnels are a 20th century idea that won't fix them. It won't produce more water, more reliable supplies, or improved conditions for the environment in the Delta.

The new EIR/EIS has not adequately addressed our above stated concerns. That is why we oppose the Delta Tunnels/California Water Fix (Alternative 4A).

Reclamation and DWR should prepare and circulate a new Draft EIR/EIS that will include alternatives that reduce water exports and increase Delta flows for consideration by the public and decision-makers. Such alternatives have a far better chance of complying with the Delta Reform Act and the federal Endangered Species and Clean Water Acts.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'B'.

Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla  
Executive Director  
Restore the Delta