



Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

Celebrating 80 years of protecting the planet

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March 14, 2017

Board of Directors
Santa Clara Valley Water District
5750 Almaden Expressway
San Jose, CA 95118

RE: March 14, 2017 Agenda Item 5.1 Review and Confirm Proposed Principles Related to California WaterFix

Dear SCVWD Board,

The Sierra Club is concerned about some of the proposed Santa Clara Valley Water District Draft Principles – California Water Fix (CWF), and we heartily support other principles. The following comments focus on the principles we support and how they can be implemented. Other principles appear to assume the twin tunnels project will go forward and we would like to reject that assumption.

Staff presentation slide 9 on Costs and Financing, #C states “The District supports full public disclosure of costs of all proposed solutions.” This principle supports public outreach about projected State Water Project (SWP) Parcel Tax increases and water rate increases over time and cumulatively with other increases. Holding a few Board meetings with 10-day notice is not sufficient.

Staff presentation slide 2, “Board consideration/action on CWF, does not include any public outreach. Based on this there will be no public outreach about the project before June/July when the Board will decide on participation, design construction, Joint Power Authority, and interim funding.

The public would certainly be concerned if they were informed. **In fact, any increase in SWP parcel taxes to build new infrastructure should be on the ballot.** The truth is this project won’t happen sooner than the 2018 election and making decisions in 2017 would be premature.

This planning effort compares to a County General Plan and extensive public outreach is warranted given the important decisions to be made on the direction of water supply investments in our County. A ballot measure would be the ultimate outreach, would provide protection from lawsuits, and is an outreach method the District is familiar with.

Other principles that support public outreach and a longer decision making process for the WaterFix project:

- “The board will evaluate not only ecosystem and water supply benefits, but also whether the balance of the CWF’s costs and benefits weighs in favor of the District’s customers and ratepayers.” (Slide 5 #F)
- “Any participation in the CWF would be part of a comprehensive plan that includes sustainable approaches for improved water supply, water quality, and reliability through increased

regional self-sufficiency. Methods include increased conservation, water use efficiency, recycling and reuse, conjunctive use of groundwater, and other approaches to contribute to reducing reliance on the Delta..." (Slide 6 #C)

- "Protection and restoration of a healthy sustainable Bay-Delta Estuary includes improvements in habitat, water quality, **flows**, and water supply to support fisheries, wildlife, and a resilient ecosystem..." (Slide 7 #D)

The point about flows is important because the State Water Resources Control Board is about to approve Phase I of the Delta Water Quality Control Plan, and there are two more phases to follow. These plans will set flow requirements that will affect the feasibility of the currently proposed CWF project, further supporting the argument for delaying decisions on the CWF.

Lastly, we are concerned there is only passing acknowledgement of the need to reduce reliance on imported Delta water as required by the 2009 Delta Reform Act. The District needs to work harder to show how imported water will be reduced from 55% to 40% of our water supply through conservation, re-use, and other alternative measures.

We would also like to take this opportunity to remind you of a comment we submitted on January 31 related to the Water Supply Master Plan. Staffs cost and yield estimates for the Water Fix at the time were unrealistic. CWF will not supply an additional 18,000 to 30,000 acre feet. Maintaining current supplies is the best-case scenario. The \$17 billion State cost estimate is also low compared to independent estimates.

We ask the Board to consider focusing on maintenance of our current infrastructure and not rush to build more large infrastructure before consulting with the public – ratepayers and your constituents.

Thank you for considering these comments in the interest of your constituents and the bay delta ecosystem.

Respectfully Submitted,



Katja Irvin, AICP
Water Committee Chair
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

Cc: Paul Rogers, Mercury News ??