

Michele King

Subject: FW: To Linda LeZotte / SCVWD Board: * In Defense Of The Delta *

From: Jim Blickenstaff <jpblick@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, October 9, 2017 3:50 PM
To: llezotte@valleywater.org
Cc: 'Jim Blickenstaff'
Subject: To Linda LeZotte / SCVWD Board: * In Defense Of The Delta * .

Please, if you would, consider the issues raised in the below article when reviewing your “Water Fix” options at your upcoming Board Meeting. Could you also see that it is made part of the Public Record?

Another preferable and available alternative would be augmentation of Los Vaqueros Reservoir. Let’s not become partners in an expensive Southern California plan to drain out what little fresh water remains in our Delta for their growth and Ag demands. Thanks –

Jim Blickenstaff, San Ramon CA

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The Water Fix Is In: Same Old “Solutions” In An Era Of Global Warming, And Depleted Fresh Water Resources.

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A recent complication to the issue has been the Trump

Administration's biased support, through the Fish and Wildlife Service, to a delicate, very complicated water and environmental issue. We need to clarify to what degree a supportive decision was simply Trump politics, and what portion, if any, was based on real science. It's likely this is but the first of a series of unscientific / anti-environmental decisions by the agencies under the control of this administration and it's like minded EPA. For example, they make the fundamental mistake of 'ruling' on the negative impacts of the tunnels without integrating their function in the over- arching historical context of decades of draining Northern California water resources, in particular the Delta, for demands for more and more water for Southern California. The Twin Tunnels must be seen as simply the latest and largest tool in this broader picture of California politics assuring long term and ongoing reduction of Delta water resources. In that more realistic context, the salmon, the Delta Smelt, and Striped Bass are destined to become extinct as their water habitat continues its progression to uninhabitable. The USFWS (and NOAA) need only chart the steady decline of key fish species for the last 50 to 70 years, and note how it correlates to the steadily increasing diversion for water districts and Ag – dominated by those in the south.

Populations of salmon have declined by at least 75%. The Delta Smelt has gone from millions to the edge of extinction over that time. The USFWS can simply extrapolate the historic political induced progression to its inevitable outcome of widespread fish populations collapse. In fact, it is already happening – without the tunnels! This profound historic paradigm – not incorporated in The USFWS outcome conclusions, and now about to embrace the Twin Tunnels – renders the Federal finding of ‘probably’ no harm, or no “deeper” harm, bizarrely disconnected. One guarantee we can count on is that the huge tunnels are NOT going to be used to add water – the one thing the Delta eco-system desperately needs! The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service further underestimates negative impacts by taking at face value the “safeguards” planned by the Brown Administration and State’s Natural Resources Agency. Projections founded in politically vulnerable -subject to change- safeguards are not science -- they are little more than “wishful thinking.” Therefore, such conclusions must be critiqued for a process and findings corrupted by a weak scientific discipline, and an overarching political bias -- and categorized accordingly as to degree of legitimacy.

The Governor is speaking out of both sides of his mouth on

the desperate fish situation in the State and Delta. He and the Governor of Oregon recently sent a joint letter to the Federal Government pleading for more resources to protect dramatically declining populations of Chinook Salmon. Speaking the truth in his joint letter, and then taking a dismissive stance toward the plight of salmon, when promoting his Delta Twin Tunnels “Conveyance System.”

Droughts are going to become the new normal as global warming increases. This last drought stopped even the minimum water volume necessary to sustain just the Delta eco-system, let alone the huge volumes demanded by southern water interests. It serves as an example of how the twin tunnels are an outdated, wrong answer for the new challenges and condition of an advancing phase of global warming. As the Peripheral Canal, it was wrong, and rejected by the State voters 30 years ago. It’s even more wrong today. Today the Delta is in far greater distress. There is a growing intrusion of sea water into the Bay/Delta eco-system, the rising sea levels are accelerating beyond projections, there are longer and more severe droughts, air and water temperatures continue to hit record highs, the natural/seasonal drainage to the Delta has changed, and the Delta is even more degraded by water diversion. In

addition to the relentless history of water diversion, the afore mentioned Global Warming negative impacts on the Delta have yet to be properly acknowledged, and integrated into a realistic cumulative impacts exasperating its very survivability. In spite of this, an eco-system - in obvious crisis - is now facing the ominous prospects of two huge, expensive, tunnels whose fundamental purpose is to drain out more and more of the remaining fresh water. The U.S.F.W.S., and the State Natural Resources Agency, are okay with that.

Incredible!

The State optimistically estimates \$17 billion for the cost of the Water Fix/Tunnels. They failed to acknowledge a recently discovered need for a \$6.5 billion taxpayer subsidy, as well as, the history of huge cost overruns for State mega-projects, like High-Speed Rail -- who's budget has doubled to \$68 billion and is still rising! Using a conservative estimate of \$25 billion, a similar dollar amount devoted to other, competing, alternatives, still needs to be analyzed for comparative cost effectiveness. One such alternative would be to invest the \$25 billion in salt water conversion plants. I say this, not as an advocate of this option, but to demonstrate one of many viable, but unexamined alternatives. With the growing technology available to minimize polluting by-products, as

well impacts on sea life, is it possible that a State commitment to sea water conversion would be an environmentally preferable position to that of draining out what precious and essential fresh water still remains for the Delta? And 'good news,' while Delta water is very limited, and desperately needed locally, Global Warming has guaranteed there will be plenty of sea water. Plus, it will be getting more diluted all the time, as the polar ice caps continue to melt! The Israelis' and Saudis' have led the way on large scale desalination. Their very existence depends on it! More 'good news,' neither country is awash in toxic byproducts. A side-by-side, detailed, comparative evaluation of \$25 billion toward this alternative, as well as several other plausible alternatives cited by opposition leaders, would, no doubt, reveal options far less devastating to the Delta. This particular case actually acknowledges, and makes use of, the changing dynamics of a warming planet, with the eventual outcome being a steady, reliable, significantly increased water supply for Southern California – in good times and bad!

Litigation is looking more and more critical and necessary in stopping what would eventually be the conversion of the Delta to a brackish dead-sea back wash. In fact, the

NRDC, Defenders of Wildlife, Bay institute, and Gold Gate Salmon Association, have already launched the first salvo in the upcoming battle with a major lawsuit against the project this June 29th. More recently, an impressive array of counties, cities, agencies, grass root and environmental groups have filed numerous legal challenges across the State against the Department of Water Resources for violations of CEQA law. “For 10 years we’ve been fighting to get tunnel proponents to look jointly for better solutions that don’t destroy the Delta. They didn’t listen, and now we must turn to the courts to enforce critical environmental protections...”, said plaintiff, Osha Meserve. I expect the growing network of opposition parties will continue to build a formidable, Legal Wall. Below is just a short list of such groups:

- > Restore the Delta
- > Friends of the River Foundation
- > Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman’s Association
- > Environmental Water Caucus.
- > Natural Resources Defense Council
- > Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association
- > Center for Biological Diversity
- > California Water Impact Network
- > California Sportsfishing Protection Alliance

- > Bay Institute
- > Sierra Club
- > Golden Gate Salmon Association
- > North Coast Rivers Alliance
- > San Francisco Crab Boat Owners Association
- > Winnemem Winto Tribe
- > AquAlliance
- > Save the California Delta Alliance
- > D. W., [Delta farmer], and collaboration of 150 other landowners throughout the State.
- > Numerous Counties, including Contra Costa, Solano and Yolo.
- > Numerous Cities, including Stockton and Antioch.
- > Numerous State Agencies, including Central Delta and Local Agencies of North Delta.

All this comes as time is running out on the Brown Administration. Next year, we will have elected a new governor. The foremost question from any and all pro-Delta groups must be: “What is your position on the Twin Tunnels?”, then, coordinate and campaign accordingly. I doubt many other candidates will share Mr. Brown’s long (family) history and personalize, even emotional, “Tunnel Vision” toward water demands from

Southern California. But, either way, it should become a defining position, bearing directly on the winnability of whoever decides to run. The vast support network for this purpose will be invaluable. Brown leaving office may turn out to be the ultimate solution to a decades old obsession (whether it be the Peripheral Canal of yesteryear, or Twin Tunnels today) that sacrifices the Delta eco-system for powerful, thirsty friends and associates in the south.

Once built the tunnels cannot be “unbuilt.” Proponents are counting on this. They also know that “guarantees” and promises CAN be undone. After the tunnels are in place, Phase II would be the political necessity of changing the promises made to allow the more politically powerful southern water interests to finally complete the deal on effectively taking what’s left of the Bay/Delta fresh water, for their more “important” water needs. At this late stage, it will essentially be over. Little left but the proper spin explaining why the State must answer the “greater needs” and demands from the south. It’s worth noting here, the quote from State Water Official, Jerry Meral, four years ago; “The Bay Delta Conservation Plan is not about saving the Delta... The Delta cannot be saved...” He was soon silenced,

not because his comments were untruthful, but because their timing was indiscreet. Mr. Meral needed to wait until the tunnels were a done deal and serving their “conveyance” purposes before revealing this harsh truth. Brown’s actions only reinforced his assessment when the Governor reduced Delta habitat “restoration” by 70% -- from 100,000 acres to 30,000 acres! Again, not based on scientific findings, but on the political expedience that expensive restoration costs could kill the deal for tunnel proponents -- with their very limited tolerance for extraneous costs adding to an already overpriced project. As if to prove the point, both the Westlands Water District, and the L. A. City Council, recently voted to reject participation in the funding plan – in spite of an unrealistically low total cost of “just” \$16 billion. Even the supposed winners in the big water grab are not okay with the big money demand! If you don’t like it now – just wait!

The final failure of Jerry Brown’s “Water Fix” plan will not simply be it’s overpriced cost ineffectiveness, nor its inability to answer the challenges of a new climate paradigm -- it will be the inevitable realization that the Co-Equal Goals are also just one more “very sincere” promise that cannot be kept. “Sorry, Northern California,

we were wrong... You Lose – Again.” Or, in the parlance of Sarah Palin; “How’s that ‘Co-Equal’ thing working out for ya!? {Ha-Ha-Ha}.” We cannot allow it to get to that point.

Jim Blickenstaff

Former San Ramon City Council Member,

30 Year Environmental Activist.

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