

Restore the Delta

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The Delta Conveyance Project

Overview: The Delta Conveyance Project would construct two new intake facilities, intended to divert water from the Sacramento River via a single tunnel connecting to existing State Water Project infrastructure. To protect Delta communities and ecosystems, Restore the Delta opposes the construction of the DCP for the reasons outlined below.

Unaccounted Costs, Planning & Construction Concerns:

- Cost: \$20.1 billion *and*:
 - + Annual construction overruns
 - + Interest
 - + Permitting
 - + Litigation
- 15–20-year construction timeline, *and*:
 - + Permitting schedule
 - + Delta Stewardship Council evaluation schedule
 - + Litigation
 - + Sourcing for funding
- No secure funding for construction

Operational Concerns:

- Complete flexibility to change large elements of the operations plan, leaving the question of what implementation will look like.
- Non-existent caps on inflow at the North Delta intake facilities, meaning potential water capture could inhibit natural flows necessary for the Bay-Delta ecosystem
- Inadequate water quality monitoring, focused only on salinity and strategically selected far downstream of the intake facilities at high-flow points, effectively hiding total impacts to the Sacramento River
 - Significant data gaps exist along the Sacramento River, resulting in an uninformed proposal for the Delta tunnel.

Ecosystem & Community Concerns:

- Rising number of threatened or endangered fish species: 7 native species qualify for protection under the federal or state Endangered Species Act
- Current diversions are already impacting:
 - Water Quality, including the increase of harmful algal blooms,
 - Beneficial Uses, including fishing, recreation + tourism; and
 - Tribal Beneficial Uses.
- Prolonged construction would:
 - Ruin the Delta's agricultural economy,
 - Increase air pollution and traffic congestion; and
 - Alienate communities and tribes from their waterways.

Recommendations:

- Upgrades to existing levee infrastructure would:
 - Cost \$8 billion **LESS** than the DCP, at \$12.5 billion for **ALL** levee upgrades across the Bay-Delta,
 - Secure water reliability for existing infrastructure (SWP + CVP) by reducing chance of failures due to seismic events, flooding or sea level rise,
 - Protect Delta communities from floods; and
 - Ensure the protection and survival of the Bay-Delta ecosystem

(Over for details)

The Delta Conveyance Project

What is the Delta tunnel? The Delta tunnel proposal would construct two new water intake facilities on the Sacramento River in the North Delta to fill a single tunnel that would divert freshwater flows. Framed as the solution to California's water reliability problem, the project would not solve water shortage or availability challenges. Furthermore, impacts to Delta communities and the Bay-Delta ecosystem would be devastating.

The Delta tunnel would divert additional freshwater flows, for which DWR does not currently have the water-rights, that are desperately needed for the Bay-Delta estuary to survive and thrive. Current diversions for the State Water Project are already resulting in the increase of Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) and the degradation of water quality. Additional diversions would increase these threats, harming the communities and tribes that rely on the Bay-Delta waterway for cultural practices, recreation, sustenance and other beneficial uses.

The Bay-Delta is in a state of ecological collapse, with 8 native fish species currently included on the state or federal endangered species list. The best available science points to unimpaired freshwater flows and temperature thresholds as the key to sustaining these fish populations. The EIR itself states that fisheries will not improve with the project, and the existing pumps will be used 80% of the time. Further diversions will continue to spiral the collapse of this critical ecosystem.

Operations. In August, DWR released their operations "plan," which fails to affirmatively identify any action to be taken regarding the tunnel without caveat. Capacity or caps on inflow to the system are nonexistent, and the bypass flows for fish populations are insufficiently measured using markers far upstream of the facilities. The water quality and flow monitoring identified are inadequate at best, with substantial data gaps resulting in an overall uninformed proposal.

Beyond the operations itself, the project would be an enormous expense, estimated to cost **\$20.1 billion** according to DWR's cost-benefit analysis. Additional annual construction costs of 10.7%, interests on loans, and the funds already poured into planning and

development comprise an even larger total expenditure. Without definitive investors, the funding itself remains a gamble. Other options, such as investment in levee upgrades, would cost significantly less to ensure a similar level of water reliability.



Image courtesy of Dept. of Water Resources

Timing remains a crucial piece of the puzzle. DWR estimates 15-20 years for the construction period, but this doesn't account for permitting, litigation, sourcing for funding and other items that will arise along the way. With climate change, a solid piece of infrastructure like the tunnel does not provide the flexibility necessary. There are other, more cost-effective solutions that the State can and should invest in instead.