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Alternatives to Delta Tunnels Boondoggle Overlooked

State admits a \$3 Billion error in their analysis but continues to ignore comprehensive plans that would actually address California's water needs

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman John Garamendi (CA-3), former Deputy Secretary of the Interior, [joins other Northern California Members of Congress in pointing to a nearly \\$3 billion error made by the State as yet another indication that Governor Brown's proposed \\$14.5 billion Delta Tunnels water grab isn't ready for prime time](#). Including construction of the Delta Tunnels, the entire project is expected to cost water ratepayers and California taxpayers over \$25 billion. As an alternative to this boondoggle, Congressman Garamendi has offered an updated version of his "Water Plan for All of California," which is described below.

State Admits Overestimating Cost of "Portfolio Approach"

The California Natural Resources Agency released a correction to revise the state's original cost estimate of an alternative, smaller water project supported by a broad array of interests, including Northern California Members of Congress. The state originally asserted the alternative to the governor's plan would save \$3 billion and that this was too small of a savings to merit changing the Governor's plan. But late Tuesday night, the state admitted it had made a mistake and that the alternative would actually be \$6 billion less expensive than the Governor's tunnels – a \$3 billion difference.

The alternative project, known as the "portfolio alternative," contains a single-bore, smaller capacity tunnel and invests in a variety of local water supplies, storage, recycling and levee projects to stretch water usage and provide greater resource flexibility. The state's original estimate assumed the alternative project was a dual-bore project. With the revised cost projections, this single bore tunnel is estimated to cost nearly \$6 billion less than the dual-bore proposal favored by the State.

Congressmen George Miller (CA-11), John Garamendi (CA-3), Jerry McNerney (CA-9), Mike Thompson (CA-5), Rep. Ami Bera (CA-7), and Congresswoman Doris Matsui (CA-6) issued the following statement after learning about the state's serious error:

"The state's \$3 billion error is unacceptable and emblematic of the BDCP's deeply flawed process, one that lacks input from Delta stakeholders. It is an example of the risks of pushing through a plan without fully understanding the consequences or alternatives. It's clear that the Brown Administration did not honestly analyze the Portfolio Alternative, which offers an all-of-the-above approach to California's water problems, as a viable option. The state owes the public a full and proper explanation of both of these plans, who will truly benefit from each, and what they will actually cost. They should not rush this process until they can do so in an open and transparent manner."

Congressman Garamendi (CA-3) added, "The driving force behind the Delta Tunnels boondoggle has been ideology not science. It's time to change course and let the facts lead us toward conclusions – not the other way around. We need more water to meet the needs of our state's approximately 40 million residents, but the Tunnels don't add a drop of new water. For that reason, I urge consideration of a comprehensive water plan that adds to our supply and includes water storage, recycling, and conservation, levee improvements, and respect for existing water rights."

Congressman Garamendi Releases Updated "Water Plan for All of California"

As an alternative to the Delta Tunnels, Garamendi has offered a comprehensive plan to meet the needs of the entire state. The [op-ed](#) below outlines this "Water Plan for All of California."

["California needs a comprehensive water plan that creates new water supplies—not a \\$25 billion dollar boondoggle."](#)

By Congressman John Garamendi

California's aging water infrastructure is insufficient for our present and future needs. Unfortunately, the current Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) and its two massive tunnels is a destructive \$25 billion boondoggle that won't solve the problem. California can solve its water needs and end the water wars that pit north vs. south and water exporters vs. environmentalists – but not with the BDCP.

California needs a comprehensive water plan that generates new water and is focused on six priorities:

- 1) New water storage infrastructure,
- 2) Water conservation,
- 3) Water recycling,
- 4) Fixing the Delta with levee improvements, habitat restoration, and a right sized conveyance,
- 5) A science-driven process,
- 6) The protection of existing water rights.

If the BDCP moves forward, two tunnels will be constructed near Sacramento with the capacity to move 15,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). To accommodate this massive plumbing project, we would sacrifice prime agricultural land, destroy legacy Delta communities, and potentially suck our Delta dry. At a minimum cost of \$24.5 billion, it's extraordinarily expensive for California taxpayers and water ratepayers. Delta farmers, fishermen and recreation businesses would see their livelihoods destroyed to benefit powerful corporate agribusinesses operating on desert lands in part of the San Joaquin Valley.

We need to develop surface and underground water storage systems. Sites Reservoir north of Sacramento could be built and Los Vaqueros reservoir could be expanded at an estimated cost of \$4.8 billion creating the capacity to store 1.9 million acre feet of water and providing up to 700,000 acre feet of water to use each year. The San Luis dam could be repaired and expanded as could Shasta Dam. New reservoirs could be built at Los Banos Grandes and other off stream sites throughout the Central Valley. The underground aquifers of the Central Valley offer enormous storage when used in a conjunctive management system.

The quickest and cheapest new water source is conservation. The California Department of Water Resources estimates that robust conservation efforts in urban water use could save 1 million acre feet of water each year by investing \$530 million. In addition to urban conservation, we must also look to agricultural water users to conserve water. California's \$40 billion agricultural economy needs a sustainable water supply and the technology already exists to conserve 3 million acre feet of water each year at a cost of \$1.2 billion over 10 years.

Each year, 3.5 million acre feet of treated water is dumped into the Pacific Ocean by cities in the Los Angeles Basin. How foolish to pump water 500 miles, clean it, use it once, clean it to a higher standard than the day it arrives, and dump it in the ocean. 1 million acre feet could be recycled and stored in the underground aquifers in Southern California at a cost of \$1.3 billion. Similar projects must be done in Northern California. Desalination of ocean water can also add to our supplies.

With adequate investment and implementation, urban and agriculture conservation, recycling programs and new storage could create approximately 5.7 million acre feet of new water to use each year at a projected cost of \$7.8 billion.

Any plan that doesn't include levee improvements in the Delta is a plan awaiting disaster. The BDCP will spend \$25 billion, but not one dime to secure the Delta levee system that is necessary for delivering half of the anticipated water supply. How foolish and short sighted. The key Delta levees could be secured at an estimated cost of \$1 billion.

The BDCP skips all of these important sources of increased water supply. It's a \$25 billion boondoggle that won't create a single drop of new water for California.

The BDCP plan for habitat restoration is well intentioned, but too extensive and expensive. The plan calls for as much as 145,000 acres of valuable Delta farm land to be converted to wildlife habitat. Every scientific study done thus far doubts the potential of this \$10 billion proposal to restore and maintain the endangered fish in the Delta, yet the BDCP moves forward as if money is no problem.

After investing in conservation, recycling, storage and Delta levees and carefully monitoring their progress, it might be necessary to construct a much smaller Delta water delivery facility. A 3,000 cubic feet per second facility could operate year round delivering 2 million acre feet water to the pumps in Tracy and on to the south. Instead of destroying heritage communities and Delta farm land, this facility could use the existing 25 mile long Sacramento Deep Water Shipping Channel for water deliveries to a short 12 mile pipe connected to existing channels leading to the Tracy pumps. This could save billions of dollars while preserving the economy and communities of the Delta.

Providing a foundation for these projects is the protection of existing water rights. If we are going to build any project, these rights must be honored.

Stop the \$25 billion BDCP boondoggle and use that money on water conservation, recycling, storage, fixing the Delta, a balanced habitat program, and a small Delta facility. California could create up to 5.7 million acre feet of new water at half the cost of the \$25 billion tunnel plan, solve its water crisis, and avoid a fruitless time consuming water war. Only by embracing a comprehensive plan can we avoid this gridlock. It's time to move forward and ensure a reliable water supply for the entire state.

Congressman Garamendi represents Northern California's 3rd Congressional District. He served as a State Senator, Lieutenant Governor, Insurance Commissioner and as President Bill Clinton's Deputy Interior Secretary.

Addendum

Storage

- Sites Reservoir:
 - o California State Water Plan Update 2009, Integrated Water Management Bulletin 160-09, Department of Water Resources, Chapter 12, http://www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/docs/cwpu2009/0310final/v2c12_surfstor_calfed_cwp2009.pdf
 - o Presentation made to the California Water Commission on July 17, 2013 on North-of-the-Delta Offstream Storage: [https://cwc.ca.gov/Documents/2013/07_July/NODOS%20Case%20Study%20Presentation%207-11-13%20v1%20\(3\).pdf](https://cwc.ca.gov/Documents/2013/07_July/NODOS%20Case%20Study%20Presentation%207-11-13%20v1%20(3).pdf)
- Los Vaqueros
 - o Contra Costa Water District Power Point Slide on Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion
 - o California State Water Plan Update 2009, Integrated Water Management Bulletin 160-09, Department of Water Resources, Chapter 12, http://www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/docs/cwpu2009/0310final/v2c12_surfstor_calfed_cwp2009.pdf

Urban Conservation

- \$530 per acre-foot of water was CALFED's analysis for the cost of urban conservation as provided in the California State Water Plan Update 2009, Integrated Water Management Bulletin 160-09, Department of Water Resources, Vol. 2, Ch. 3, http://www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/docs/cwpu2009/0310final/v2c03_urbwtruse_cwp2009.pdf

Agriculture Conservation

- Potential water saved and costs were provided by PureSense and the water conservation technology they have to offer California agriculture. www.puresense.com

Water Recycling

- \$1,300 per acre-foot of recycled water is the higher estimate of what it would cost for the capital and operation costs of water recycling as provided in the California State Water Plan Update 2009, Integrated Water Management Bulletin 160-09, Department of Water Resources, Vol. 2, Ch. 3, http://www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/docs/cwpu2009/0310final/v2c03_urbwtruse_cwp2009.pdf

Levee Improvements

- Based on the Natural Resources Defense Council's research and its portfolio alternative, a \$1 billion investment in key Delta levees would prevent water exports and people who live and work in the Delta.

