



Widespread OPPOSITION for Governor's Proposal to Fast-Track Delta Tunnel Project

PRESS RELEASE

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Leaders of the Legislative Delta Caucus and statewide organizations stood united together today during a press conference to denounce Governor Newsom's budget proposal to fast-track the Delta Tunnel Project and encourage fellow legislators to oppose any plan to accelerate construction of the \$20 billion-plus, destructive tunnel.

The project is receiving widespread **opposition** from leaders throughout the state, especially those in the Delta whose 4 million residents would be most directly impacted.

Here's what they are saying:

Legislative Delta Caucus

"The bipartisan Delta Caucus is unanimous in strong opposition to the governor's proposal to fast-track the Delta Tunnel, a \$20 billion unaffordable project to be paid by ratepayers who are already struggling with the high cost of living in California. This project will destroy prime farmland, wreak havoc on the Delta region for a generation, and fail to solve the state's water issues. We call on the Legislature to quickly reject the governor's proposal. California should instead pursue less costly and destructive alternatives, including fortifying Delta levees and increasing water recycling, water efficiency, and groundwater storage."

Senator Jerry McNerney (D-Pleasanton), California Legislative Delta Caucus Co-Chair

"Governor Newsom's proposal to fast-track the costly and destructive Delta Tunnel Project in the state budget is an ill-conceived plan that the Legislature should reject. The Delta water tunnel is expected to cost at least \$20 billion — and likely much more — and will destroy nearly 4,000 acres of prime farmland in the fragile Delta, along with salmon fisheries and tribal resources. Plus, the tunnel's costs would have to be shouldered by ratepayers who are already overburdened by skyrocketing utility bills."

Assemblywoman Lori D. Wilson (D-Suisun City) California Legislative Delta Caucus Co-Chair

"The Delta Conveyance Project will devastate the Delta ecosystem and create a massive financial burden for ratepayers. It is deeply troubling that on the same day, the May Revision includes painful cuts to vulnerable communities, we are seeing a renewed push for an unnecessary and damaging project that will

cost taxpayers billions more. Even more concerning is that this project is being advanced to benefit agricultural interests in other regions, interests that are helping fund the very effort to divert water away from the Delta. This approach threatens the livelihood of our local communities and undermines the sustainability of our regional economy. Shifting water from one farming region to support another does not solve our water crisis, it exacerbates it.”

Assemblymember Rhodesia Ransom (D-Tracy)

“I’m disappointed to see this proposal to override legal protections and statutes to violate both water and property rights. Let’s be real- this is a \$20 billion water grab that shifts wealth from the San Joaquin Delta to wealthy Southern California interests. This would steal our water and harm the Central Valley’s Delta.”

U.S. Rep. Josh Harder (D-Tracy)

“The Delta Tunnel is a direct attack on the region’s economy, and it’s clear that politicians care more about lawns in Beverly Hills than protecting the fruit-and-nut basket of the world.”

U.S. Representatives Mike Thompson, John Garamendi, Mark DeSaulnier, Josh Harder, Doris Matsui

“The Delta Tunnel poses a grave threat to the environmental, economic, and cultural well-being of communities in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta region. The Bay-Delta is one of the most ecologically significant estuaries on the West Coast and supports thousands of fishing jobs, vital agricultural lands, tribal and environmental justice communities, and some of the most vulnerable ecosystems in the state. From exacerbating water quality issues for our local agriculture and wildlife to creating water scarcity, this project’s unintended consequences will be a calamity in our communities. In addition, with an estimated cost of over \$20 billion, this project would put a significant financial burden on our state. As the impact of climate change continues to grow, we support responsible and effective actions to address our state’s water management challenges. Instead of revising a decades-old proposal such as the Delta Tunnel, we must invest in forward-thinking alternatives that cost less and can be completed faster. This includes increasing our water storage capacity, modernizing our existing conveyance infrastructure to limit evaporation, increasing our water use efficiency, and more, which have all seen significant federal interest and investment.”

Delta Counties Coalition (Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, Yolo Counties)

“On behalf of the DCC and the 4 million Californians who reside in the Delta, we are strongly against Governor Newsom’s proposal: fast-tracking the Delta Conveyance Tunnel project through a trailer on his 2025 budget. This deeply flawed and fiscally irresponsible initiative risks becoming one of the most expensive and ecologically destructive infrastructure boondoggles in California history. The project’s estimated \$20 billion price tag has remained unchanged for three years, defying all logic, current tariff unpredictability, and historic precedent for large-scale state infrastructure efforts. California has an extensive track record of projects running significantly over budget, and even a modest estimate suggests the true cost of this tunnel could soar to \$80 billion or more. At a time when our state is reeling from the compounding crises of wildfire recovery, water insecurity, political instability, and a cost-of-living emergency, this project would shift the financial burden squarely onto ratepayers and water users—primarily in Southern California. These are families already struggling to make ends meet. They should not be expected to foot the bill for a project that fails to solve our water challenges and existentially threatens the largest freshwater estuary in the Western United States.”

Winnemem Wintu Tribe: Gary Mulcahy, Governmental Liaison

“Governor Newsom wants to be like Trump so bad he is fast tracking processes to get his own agenda done. Good job Donald Newsom.”

Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians: Malissa Tayaba, Vice Chair

“We know there are solutions that will restore and protect our sacred waterways and allow our people to maintain our culture and traditions while providing sufficient water for Southern California. Instead of pursuing those solutions, Governor Newsom is pushing the Delta Conveyance Project, which would destroy the remaining life in our Delta watershed and eco-cultural estuary.

For a Governor who has apologized for the historic mistreatment of tribes, made verbal commitments to ‘right the wrongs of the past’, and supported environmental restoration and tribal stewardship in other regions of the state, the latest proposal to fast-track the Delta Conveyance Project, circumvent laws meant to protect tribal communities, and jeopardize tribal sacred sites and eco-cultural resources is yet another indication that detrimental impacts to tribes only matter if they do not impose on state water delivery infrastructure. We hope the legislature will see the value in our existence and stand up against the Governor’s Delta Conveyance proposals that would cause more irreparable harm to California tribal people.”

Restore the Delta: Cintia Cortez, Policy Program Manager

“The proposed trailer bill is a blatant attempt to codify illegal provisions to advance the Delta Tunnel. It’s a misuse of the budget process—bypassing legal requirements and undermining the public processes that are fundamental to our democracy. As it stands, the project is incomplete, violates multiple laws, and could not legally move forward otherwise. Restore the Delta remains committed to defending Delta communities in the face of these flagrant efforts.”

Save California Salmon: Regina Chichizola, Executive Director

“Governor Newsom’s efforts to force approvals for the Delta Conveyance Project ignores long standing objections from Tribes, Delta communities, and commercial fishing families.

Californians oppose this project because it will cause irreversible harm to water quality, salmon, communities, and the fragile Delta ecosystem while providing marginal, and unreliable, benefits to the rest of the state. When the governor was elected, he promised to protect California’s environment. Now he calls for the stripping of critical public protections and selling our water to the highest bidder. It is getting harder and harder to see the difference between Newsom and Trump.”

Food & Water Watch: Nicole Ghio, California Director

“Our Governor is absolutely correct that climate change has had a significant impact on our state’s water supplies, posing a major risk for millions of Californians that need and deserve clean, safe drinking water. However – as we have been saying for years – the Delta Tunnel is not the answer. Rather than recklessly fast-tracking this unnecessary, harmful, and expensive project that will mainly benefit corporate agribusinesses and other powerful interests, Governor Newsom must hold major polluters accountable and immediately rein in the water abuse by the big agribusiness and fossil fuel corporations that guzzle up billions of gallons of California’s water.”

Resource Renewal Institute: Scott Webb, Director of Advocacy

“This administration is catering to the same powerful agribusiness interests who have spent decades attacking environmental protections and funding anti-democratic agendas. Fast-tracking the Delta Tunnel through the state budget takes power away from the legislature and is a slap in the face to Tribes, Delta communities, and everyday Californians who will pay the price.”

Golden State Salmon Association: Scott Artis, Executive Director

“The Governor's proposal is a Trump-style attack on the salmon fishing industry and the state’s biggest rivers. At the end of the day, the Delta Tunnel is a nail in the coffin of California's once mighty salmon runs, a stake in the heart of the Delta, and a raid on the pocketbooks of the people of Southern California and Silicon Valley.”

San Francisco Baykeeper: Eric Buescher, Managing Attorney

“There are all kinds of environmental reasons that Governor Newsom’s pet Delta tunnel project should never be built, and plenty of hurdles that stand in the way: its price tag, its questionable legality, and the lack of leadership within the governor’s own administration and those that came before him. Despite Governor Newsom’s temper tantrums, nothing justifies waiving the laws that protect San Francisco Bay, its fish and wildlife, and the clean water that belong to all Californians.

Waiving California's legal safeguards is simply not OK, and it's sad when our leaders choose to ignore the laws rather than implement them faithfully. Such disregard for the law, public input, and judicial review is something we'd expect from the Trump administration, but it has no place in the Golden State."

Defenders of Wildlife: Ashley Overhouse, Water Policy Advisor

"Let's be crystal clear: Californians are being asked to divert billions of dollars to benefit small, wealthy interests — jeopardizing the freshwater ecosystems that support our communities, fisheries and biodiversity. It is disappointing that Governor Newsom repeatedly goes against the will of most Californians by undermining our judges and legislators and attacking the Bay-Delta and our rivers."

California Sportfishing Protection Alliance: Chris Shutes, Executive Director

"The proposed legislation is a sinister escalation of the administration's tendency to promote its divert-baby-divert water policies as an absolute truth. The group-think goes like this: if we can't get our way playing by the rules, then the rules must be wrong. So get rid of the rules and make special rules for our agencies and their projects. This is how bad law is made."

Sierra Club California: Caty Wagner, Water Campaign Manager

"Gavin Newsom's water agenda encapsulates his entire governorship - it is a series of policy and infrastructure decisions meant to benefit his selected communities cloaked in thinly veiled language of equity and sustainability. Newsom announced his plans to further the Delta Conveyance Project by ignoring crucial regulatory and judicial processes meant to protect endangered species, ensure community engagement in permitting, and stop rampant government overreach with eminent domain. Moreover, he is working to roll back regulations on bond money so he can direct taxpayer money towards a project repeatedly rejected by voters. The announcement solidifies Newsom's legacy as one catered to communities who do not face the brunt of the climate crisis."

Friends of the River: Jann Dorman, Executive Director

"For too long, attempts to modernize our critical water infrastructure have stalled in the endless spin cycle of the governor's expensive projects, while burdening the people of California with growing costs. We're done with boondoggles – our state needs a sensible approach to water infrastructure that actually addresses our climate challenges as soon as possible. The Governor's pet financial behemoth will land a cannonball dive into the limited pool of funds needed by water suppliers for rising maintenance costs, and new investments in conservation, water reuse, and recycling. We need to stop this project as soon as possible, so that we can better store and manage water to prepare for a hotter, drier, future. Let's NOT get this project built."

LA Waterkeeper: Bruce Reznik, Executive Director

"We continue to be disappointed at the Governor's singular focus on fast-tracking the expensive and ill-conceived Delta Conveyance Project. Local officials throughout Los Angeles have affirmed their commitment to resilient local water supplies, including Metropolitan Water District's release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report for their Pure Water Southern California wastewater recycling project yesterday, which follows shortly after the adoption of their Climate Adaptation Master Plan for Water last month. It's time for Newsom to place environmental and community needs above his legacy project."

California Delta Chambers & Visitor's Bureau: Bill Wells, Executive Director

"The California Delta Chambers & Visitor's Bureau strongly opposes the Delta Conveyance Project to divert much of the flow of the Sacramento River around the Delta starting at the tiny town of Hood. To solve California's water problems, we need to create new fresh water, not reallocate it from one area to another, creating winners and losers in the process. If the river is diverted it will have a devastating effect on the Delta and its residents. Tourism is a huge industry in the Delta with millions of visitors coming each year. There are approximately 11,500 pleasure boat slips at marinas throughout the Delta, not to mention the wineries, museums and restaurants that depend on visitor traffic. Thousands more people trailer boats in for fishing, cruising, and wakeboarding."

California needs to come up with a long-term solution to create more fresh water and not divert it from one group of users to another. The very expensive tunnel is at best a short-term fix that might delay the real problem for 20 or thirty years. This, at the expense of millions of people that live near and recreate in the Delta.”

Yale Environmental Justice Law and Advocacy Clinic: Stephanie Safdi, Director

“The Governor’s trailer bill would do far more than fast-track this unprecedented water conveyance project: It would create entirely new law specific to the State Water Project, allowing the State to perpetually hold onto water permits granted fifty years ago, despite the State’s failures to construct facilities, perfect its water rights, or pursue timely extensions. The implications for fundamental features of California water law would be profound, which serves as counsel for the Delta Tribal Environmental Coalition in the Delta Conveyance Project proceeding. “The Governor’s proposed changes to statutory law attempt to entitle the Delta Conveyance Project by legislative fiat, notwithstanding injury to Delta Tribes, disadvantaged communities, and this already embattled ecosystem.”

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