



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday, July 28, 2014

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Experts Criticize BDCP Process, Call for New Draft EIR: Funding, Public Outreach, Alternatives, Science all Flawed

Sacramento, CA- Restore the Delta (RTD), opponents of Gov. Brown's rush to build Peripheral Tunnels that would drain the Delta and doom sustainable farms, and salmon and other Pacific fisheries, today presented their case that the governor's water tunnels plan is fatally flawed, does not meet state or federal standards, and called for a new Draft Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP), Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS), and public comment period. The EIR/EIS is fatally flawed due to its failure to include a viable funding plan, exclusion of any true no-tunnels alternatives, failure to comply with the Endangered Species Act as evidenced by numerous scientists' red flags, the deliberate BDCP website suppression of comments, misrepresenting taking water to be a "conservation" plan, secret BDCP planning with the exporters and their consultants, and lack of public outreach to non-English speakers.

"We call upon Gov. Brown to rethink this unsustainable water export project," said Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, executive director of RTD. "It won't solve our water challenges. The public comment process has been a mockery of outreach, dialogue and disclosure of what it will cost and who will pay. We are calling on State and Federal officials – to abandon the tunnels project and to restart an inclusive process for creating water projects that will restore the Delta and manage California's limited water supply in a fair and equitable manner for all Californians."

"The BDCP commits several profoundly disturbing abuses of our environmental laws, including the Endangered Species Act (ESA)," said Bob Wright, Senior Counsel for Friends of the River. "The BDCP fails to include any real alternatives to the Tunnels upstream from the already imperiled San Francisco Bay-Delta. The alternatives set forth in the Draft Plan and Draft EIR/EIS are simply different versions of the same project. The omission of not

so much as one alternative reducing exports is deliberate bad faith tilting the process in favor of the Tunnels and against reducing exports since no other alternatives are presented. The BDCP agencies also deliberately banned the posting of all comment and correspondence on the BDCP website. They have done everything possible to keep the public in the dark about issues, information and alternatives supplied by those who are not Tunnels supporters. The concealment of real alternatives and comments is powerful evidence that the BDCP proponents are afraid of the facts and the truth.”

Alex Aliferis, Executive Director of the Contra Costa County Taxpayers Association, criticized the hidden property tax increase planned to pay for the BDCP costs, “Water districts have not been up front about using property taxes to finance construction of Governor Brown’s twin tunnels. This could double residents’ water bills for ten years. Groups have only learned about their intent to raise property taxes through Freedom of Information Act requests, which have been shared with newspapers. Property tax payers are being misled by the State to subsidize special interest groups that influence the Governor’s office. That is why property tax payers are not being given a vote as to whether or not they support this project.”

"Since the BDCP process started, the cost estimates of Delta conveyance have increased from \$4 billion to \$15 billion, the water supply and environmental benefits have declined, and seismic levee improvements have been shown to provide a broader range of economic and public safety benefits than the tunnels for a fraction of the cost," said Dr. Jeffrey Michael, Director of the Business Forecasting Center at the University of the Pacific in Stockton. "The BDCP has not released a financial plan or cost allocation because they know viable financing will require shifting billions of dollars of cost and risk from irrigators to taxpayers. Paying the colossal debt of the Delta tunnels will force Southern California and Silicon Valley to remain overly dependent on Delta water, and reduce investment in modern, greener alternatives and technologies that would create jobs across the state."

The experts cited scientists’ harsh criticism of the proposed project. The National Academy of Sciences warned in May 2011-- in commenting on an earlier version of the BDCP Plan-- “Scientific reasons for not considering alternative actions are not presented in the plan.” (Report in Brief, p. 2, May 5, 2011).

“The vast majority of Californians have been left out of the decision making process so that this plan could be developed to slake the unquenchable thirst of almond growers in the Westlands and Kern County Water districts – and for

the leaders of the Metropolitan Water District whose careers are built on reselling water,” said Barrigan-Parrilla.

Barrigan-Parrilla noted several fundamental flaws in the BDCP, “The new intakes will create the famous reverse flows associated with the Delta pumps – but at the new location – the project transfers this problem from one location to another. Water quality for the City of Antioch and Contra Costa Water District will be ridden with pollutants like Boron and Selenium at unhealthy, cancer causing levels. Stockton will be pumping salt water at its new water intake facility.”

“The largest strip of prime farmland in California, the Delta, will be destroyed by construction, and dewatering of farms during the 10-year construction period. And lastly, numerous violations of the Endangered Species Act. To put it bluntly, fisheries will not be restored – they will instead continue to decline to the point of extinction,” said Barrigan-Parrilla.

Restore the Delta is a 15,000-member grassroots organization committed to making the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta fishable, swimmable, drinkable, and farmable to benefit all of California. Restore the Delta works to improve water quality so that fisheries and farming can thrive together again in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

www.restorethedelta.org