



Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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BDCP on Life Support; Prognosis Poor

Delay unlikely to enable BDCP to recover from congenital terminal illness

The controversial Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) that proposes to construct two 35-mile long tunnels under the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to divert Sacramento River water to agricultural plantations in the deserts of southern California was placed on life support following the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) scathing 43-page comment letter on the BDCP's draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS). The Department of Water Resources announced that a revised EIR/EIS would be delayed until sometime in 2015. BDCP's friends and family anxiously expressed hope that an infusion of additional millions of dollars and months of treatment would enable the project to recover.

However, the EPA comments coming on top of some 4,500 pages of searing reviews by municipalities, counties and water agencies that would be adversely impacted by the project, almost 2,000 pages of highly critical comments by environmental and fishing organizations, hundreds of pages of harsh analyses by government agencies and stinging comments from many thousands of California citizens reveal that BDCP is suffering from a congenital terminal illness. Additional delay is unlikely to improve BDCP's prospects for survival.

CSPA Executive Director Bill Jennings observed, "BDCP was doomed from the beginning because it was conceived on the fatal premise that you can restore an estuary hemorrhaging from a lack of flow by depriving it of another 2.5 million acre-feet of flow." "Its two goals are fundamentally inconsistent and spending additional millions to rewrite the EIR/EIS on top the quarter billion dollars already squandered on this project will not improve its life expectancy," he said, adding "its time to pull the plug, put an end to the suffering and get on with addressing California's real water problems."

The EPA diagnosis pointed out that operating the proposed conveyance facilities "would contribute to increased and persistent violations of water quality standards in the Delta, set under the Clean Water Act," and that the tunnels "would not protect beneficial uses for aquatic life, thereby violating the Clean Water Act. It noted that the EIR/EIS "assumes a 100 percent success rate for habitat restoration, which is not consistent with our experience, or supported by restoration ecology and conservation biology academic literature and scientific investigation" and detailed the likelihood that proposed habitat restoration would exacerbate the production and transport of methylmercury.

EPA criticized the failure to analyze upstream/downstream impacts and observed that there is broad scientific agreement that "existing freshwater flow conditions in the San Francisco Estuary are insufficient to protect the aquatic ecosystem and multiple fish species, and that *both increased*

freshwater flows and aquatic habitat restoration are needed to restore ecosystem processes in the Bay Delta and protect native and migratory fish populations.” The agency identified serious inadequacies in the level of analysis, the restoration and adaptive management programs, finance plan, selection of alternatives and found numerous major flaws in the specific effects determinations and impact analyses.

EPA’s comments on the BDCP EIR/EIS can be found on CSPA’s website at: www.calsport.org.

The California Sportfishing Protection Alliance (CSPA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit public benefit conservation and research organization established in 1983 for the purpose of conserving, restoring, and enhancing the state's water quality, wildlife and fishery resources and their aquatic ecosystems and associated riparian habitats. www.calsport.org