

NEWS CLIPS

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**Resource Conservation and Public
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Brown pitches delta tunnels to southern water districts

Governor lobbies in L.A. ahead of crucial votes on \$17-billion project's funding.



CALIFORNIA WaterFix calls for new diversions on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, above, and two massive tunnels to carry water to existing pumping plants. (Katie Falkenberg Los Angeles Times)

BETTINA BOXALL
LA Times 10/06/2017

With two key California WaterFix votes looming, Gov. Jerry Brown expressed confidence Thursday that water agencies will commit to enough funding to sustain the massive project.

Brown was in Los Angeles to lobby for the \$17-billion proposal, which would re-engineer the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the hub of California's complex waterworks.

"I'm just trying to put the ball over the goal line," he said in a telephone interview in between visits to the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the Southern California Assn. of Governments.

MWD's board is scheduled to vote Tuesday on a \$4.3-billion buy-in to WaterFix, which is a top priority for Brown. Two days later, the Kern County Water Agency board is expected to take its vote.

As the two largest contractors in the State Water Project, the agencies' participation is critical to WaterFix, which is to be financed by the urban and agricultural districts that get deliveries from the south delta.

That financing plan suffered a major blow last month when the Westlands Water District, the nation's largest irrigation district, voted against joining the project, saying it was unaffordable.

But Brown said Thursday that WaterFix could survive, albeit in a scaled-down version, without money from Westlands and other agricultural districts that receive delta supplies from the federal Central Valley Project.

"The project can be altered to reduce the costs if the federal contractors don't want to be a part of it," the governor said. "The state needs the water. We're not going to commit suicide. We gotta have it."

Brown, who met this week with members of the Kern County Water Agency, was optimistic about the upcoming votes.

"I think we will have enough funds for the project," he said.

His visit to Southern California was reminiscent of the lobbying his father — Gov. Pat Brown — did more than half a century ago to win support for the State Water Project, which sends delta supplies hundreds of miles down the California Aqueduct to the Southland.

It was construction of the state project that helped send the delta on a downward environmental spiral, triggering endangered species protections that in recent decades have restricted delta deliveries.

WaterFix calls for the construction of new diversions on the Sacramento River in the north delta that would feed two enormous tunnels connected to existing pumping plants in the south delta.

Proponents — including most of the state's major water agencies — hope that by withdrawing less water from the south delta, the tunnels will diminish environmental restrictions on deliveries.

Opponents — primarily environmental groups and delta growers — argue that delta conditions will worsen with the new diversions, hurting water quality and further depleting imperiled salmon populations.

The funding issue has loomed over the project for years. Now it has reached a critical point, with agencies deciding whether to open their wallets.

Environmental groups in Southern California argue that the billions of ratepayer dollars that would go to WaterFix would be better spent developing local supplies such as recycled water or stormwater capture.

To avoid a violation of the Brown Act , which generally requires legislative bodies to gather in open session, the governor met with only some members of the MWD board at the agency's Granada Hills water treatment plant. The session did not include MWD's Los Angeles delegation.

"They're hesitant to form an opinion yet. They're waiting," Brown said of the city's board members.

Audit delivers another hit to Calif. tunnels project

DON THOMPSON ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ventura County Star 10/06/2017

SACRAMENTO, Calif. - California's water managers appear to have violated state law when they hired a consultant to help plan Gov. Jerry Brown's \$16 billion project to build two massive water tunnels, state auditors said Thursday.

The audit also faulted the state Department of Water Resources for not finishing a cost-benefit analysis as the price of the tunnels climbs.

The audit is the latest blow to Brown's plan to build twin tunnels east of San Francisco to deliver water from the Sacramento River mostly to farms and cities hundreds of miles away in central and Southern California.

Last month, the nation's largest supplier of irrigation water to farms voted not to help fund the project.

The unexpected complexity of the project has resulted in significant delays and cost increases, auditors said. As of June, planning costs alone had reached \$280 million, double the department's initial 2009 cost estimate.

The costs included nearly \$14 million to Hallmark Group, a Sacramento-based company that the audit says "does not appear to possess the technical credentials or experience on relevant projects."

The audit "found that DWR did not follow state law when it replaced the program manager," and that the department needed to seek competitive bids or at least demonstrate that Hallmark was qualified.

Brown's office referred a request for comment to the Department of Water Resources.

"We must respectfully disagree" that state law wasn't followed, the department said in its response.

Hallmark's primary goal was cost control, where it has done an outstanding job, officials wrote.

The department and the Hallmark Group both said auditors misunderstood the firm's role in the project by assuming Hallmark was primarily doing construction project management that requires a licensed engineer

or general contractor.

The two, 35-mile (56-kilometer) tunnels would be the state's most ambitious water project in more than a half-century and would reconfigure the way water flows from Northern California to the southern system of canals and reservoirs managed by state and federal officials.

The water is used by much of the nation's most populous state while allowing California to lead the nation in agricultural production.

Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, executive director of the opposition group Restore the Delta, said in a statement that the state audit and a federal audit show poor planning and a misuse of taxpayer money, arguing that the project “is in complete disarray.”

The group’s policy analyst, Tim Stroshane, added that the state audit showed the department used “sweetheart deals” to hire contractors.



A report issued by the state’s auditor office on Thursday, says California’s water managers appear to have broken state law by hiring an unqualified consultant to help plan the \$16 billion project. RICH PEDRONCELLI/AP

Say yes to Cal WaterFix

If you want a continued reliable water supply for all of us in the Conejo Valley, just say yes to California WaterFix.

To ensure a steady supply of local potable water, we need to approve Gov. Jerry Brown's twin tunnels plan under the Sacramento Delta.

Why? There are two reasons.

The first is that we have no ground or surface water in the Conejo to use. Therefore, water agencies currently depend 100 percent on imported water from Northern California.

The second reason is that the present method of transporting water to us, south from Oroville Lake through the Sacramento Delta, is unsustainable due to many factors.

One of these factors is the risk of a possible earthquake up north that could disrupt our water supply for months or longer.

A second one is the risk of increased saltwater intrusion into the delta waters from San Francisco Bay due to drought or rising ocean levels.

Another huge factor is mandatory reduced pumping of the water during peak snowmelt times due to federal regulations to protect endangered fish runs.

To give you some perspective, we used to pump water south continuously; however, due to restrictions, we now have at least 20 percent less state project water pumped to us, compared to water conveyed south in the 1980s.

The Metropolitan Municipal Water District is the giant agency that brings us our Northern California water. On Oct. 10, its board will vote on whether or not to support the California WaterFix and Gov. Brown's twin tunnels.

For our water's sake, I am keeping my fingers crossed that the vote is yes.

Janna Orkney
Oak Park

Orkney is a member of the Triunfo Sanitation District board.



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Camp Pendleton says water is safe

Base is under consent decree after rats and frogs are found in treatment systems.



A PAIR of scathing state and federal investigations indicated chronic problems in the water treatment systems at the sprawling Marine base at Camp Pendleton. (Fox 5 San Diego)

By Carl Prine
LA Times 10/05/2017

Camp Pendleton officials say the water consumed by 55,000 Marines and their families is safe, despite a pair of scathing state and federal investigations indicating chronic problems in the treatment systems at the sprawling military base.

Water safety inspectors visiting Camp Pendleton over several days in late June uncovered rats rotting on a reservoir gate, a desiccated frog clinging to a reservoir ladder and a rodent carcass floating in treated water.

They also interviewed base workers listed on paper as water treatment supervisors who didn't know they were supervisors.

On Thursday, the Marines and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency entered into a consent decree designed to force the base to follow federal clean water regulations.

“Public water systems must meet all state and federal requirements to provide safe drinking water to their customers,” said Alexis Strauss, the EPA’s acting regional administrator for the Pacific Southwest. “Our priority is to ensure the base achieves compliance promptly, to serve those who live and work at Camp Pendleton.”

EPA officials told the San Diego Union-Tribune that after the Marines failed the June inspections, workers removed all animal remains from the system, cleaned the reservoirs, began routine testing of the water for coliform bacteria and chlorine levels and pledged to keep surveying water quality to ensure it was safe to drink.

“Simply put, the water is and has been safe to drink. Camp Pendleton is committed to providing safe and compliant drinking water. This is a duty and responsibility that we take very seriously,” base spokesman Carl Redding said in an emailed statement.

On Thursday, Marine leaders began circulating a notice conceding that state and federal investigators identified “vulnerabilities in the condition of our physical plant with specific emphasis on our 34 treated drinking water reservoirs across the base.”

The memo insisted that there was no emergency or “immediate health risk” and said residents didn’t need to boil water or take other corrective actions.

The state and federal investigators, however, found “significant deficiencies” at both systems that comprise the base’s total treatment program, including a failure to inspect and maintain equipment, which led to foundational cracks and inadequate seals in the reservoirs. Problems with animal remains in the reservoirs dated to 2015, according to the reports.

Some reservoirs had not been cleaned since 2009, nearly three times as long as they should have gone without a proper scrubbing. The reservoir with rodents rotting on a mesh grate had not been cleaned within the last three years, a violation of the base’s own standard operating procedures.

One reservoir — an elevated tank — was in such “poor condition” that workers feared an inspection might not even be feasible.

John Simpson, the director of Camp Pendleton’s Water Resources Division, pointed investigators to larger problems in the base’s treatment system that probably won’t be quickly solved.

carl.prine@sduniontribune.com

Prine writes for the San Diego Union-Tribune.