

Long-Term Water Strategy

Bay Delta Conservation Plan aka California WaterFix Key to Reliability

The Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP), often called the “WaterFix,” is a key part of the 2009 comprehensive water package that addresses California’s long-term water strategy. It is designed to achieve the co-equal goals of providing a reliable source of water and protecting, restoring and enhancing the Delta ecosystem while minimizing impacts to Delta communities and farms. It focuses on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, where water is diverted to serve 27 million Californians and 3 million acres of farmland. The twin tunnels revamping how water will move through the Delta are very controversial.

SUMMARY

- Upgrade the state’s aging water delivery system by constructing new infrastructure to improve reliability and sustainability.
- One big earthquake near the Delta or a major levee break will leave 27 million Californians without an adequate source of water.
- Business relies on a consistent and available water supply at a reasonable cost for planning purposes.
- The proposed BDCP is protective of the Delta ecosystem and fish habitat.

BACKGROUND

The most controversial element of the WaterFix plan is the proposed construction of two tunnels that have the capacity to move 9,000 cubic feet per second of water, which is much less than an earlier suggested plan of 15,000 cubic feet per second. The tunnels will divert a portion of the Sacramento River’s flow to three intakes near Courtland, routing the water to existing

diversion pumps close to Tracy. The goal is to avoid reverse flow in the estuary caused by current diversion pumps, which in the past have caused ecological troubles in the Delta. The new intakes will have modern fish screens better able to detour juvenile fish from the pumps. The proposed tunnels are routed to the east side of the valley to reduce impact to the Delta.

The BDCP/WaterFix plan is moving through the regulatory process, running a little behind schedule. Many changes have been introduced in response to thousands of letters and comments. During the summer of 2018, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) continued to hold hearings on critical elements of WaterFix. More hearings will undoubtedly be scheduled in 2019. The Department of Water Resources filed the required determination of consistency with the Delta Stewardship Council, which caused another flurry of appeals from environmental groups and Delta advocates.

Critics caution that the new intakes simply move the harm to endangered fish species to a different part of the estuary, damage the Delta as a community, and potentially jeopardize the agricultural economy. Proponents say the new intakes will protect endangered fish, including salmon and Delta smelt, by reducing the unnatural flows that pull young fish into the pumps, and will also improve water supply reliability in the face of climate change, earthquakes and potential levee failures that could leave 27 million people with very limited water supplies.

IMPACT ON BUSINESS

Many businesses plan for the long term. Part of the calculation to locate or expand in California depends on the cost of doing business. The cost, quality and availability of water is critical, especially for water-intensive industries. It’s well-known that California has a turbulent water history. The state’s chronic water shortage and numerous legal water rights challenges are often in the news.

The WaterFix is the state’s plan to upgrade outdated Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta infrastructure with secure water supplies while improving the Delta’s ecosystem. The plan is designed to make the most of big winter storms that produce

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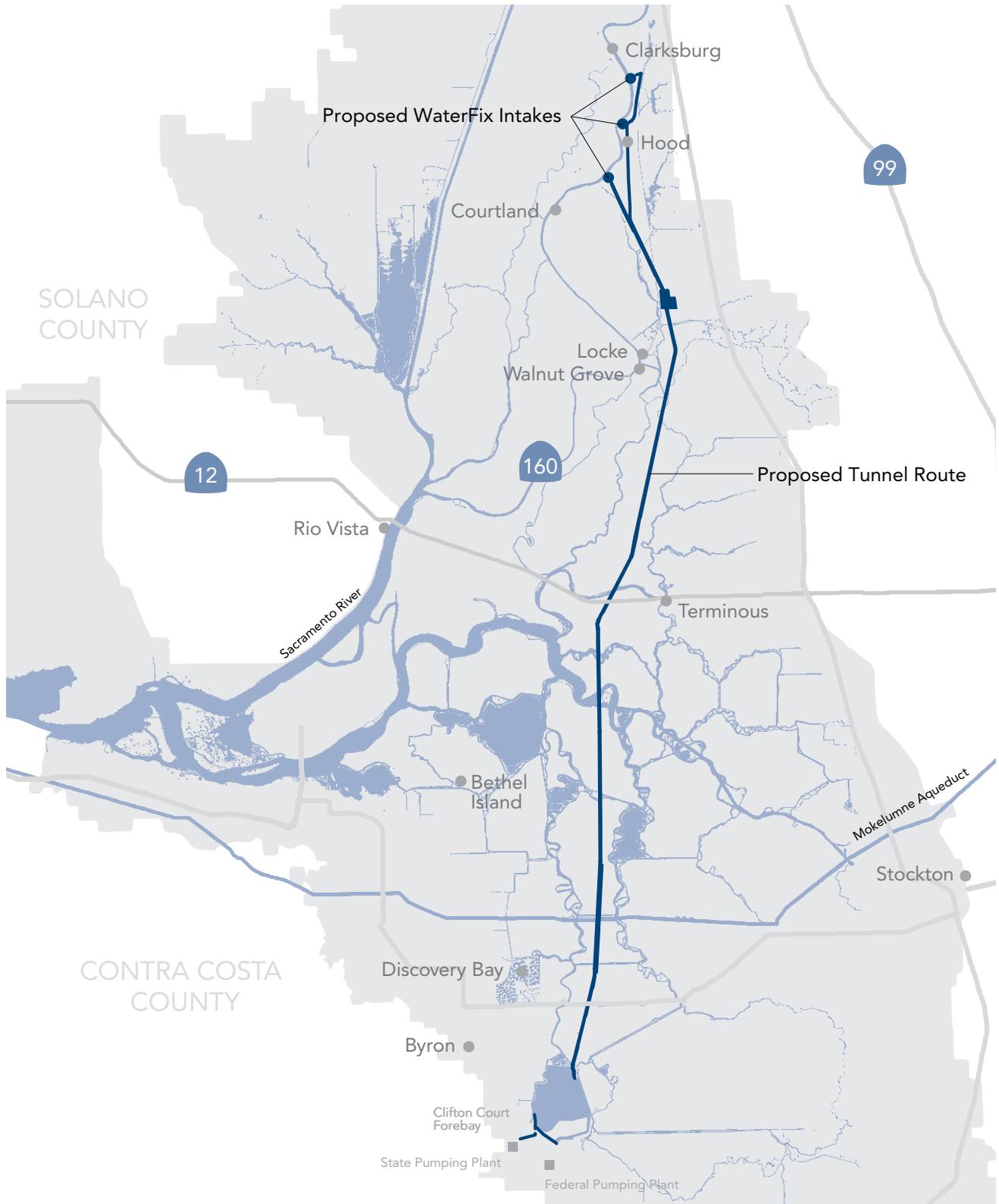
Bronze



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WATERFIX: IMPROVED NATURAL FLOWS



Source: CaliforniaWaterFix.com

more outflow than can be captured and used under current conditions. The excess flows could be routed through the new conveyance and stored for use in drier times, providing a reliable water source for businesses and residents.

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS IN 2019

The SWRCB will continue hearings on the current set of petitions and appeals. Since any progress requires many more state, local, and federal permits to be secured, business should be vigilant watching the SWRCB's hearing and workshop announcements for opportunities to offer written comments and public testimony for the plan.

CALCHAMBER POSITION

The California Chamber of Commerce supports a comprehensive solution to the state's chronic water shortage. WaterFix in conjunction with increased storage, new technologies, and water use efficiency techniques will help provide a reliable and consistent water supply.

The CalChamber supports the twin tunnels as a viable means of conveying water through the Delta. To assure a future robust economy, every avenue needs to be explored to further increase business's access to affordable water.



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