



News for Immediate Release

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Changes to Proposed Delta Conveyance Project Would Substantially Reduce Impacts to Private Landowners and Residents

SACRAMENTO —The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) on Thursday announced changes to a proposed water conveyance system in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta that would shrink by 50 percent the total permanent footprint of the project, shift more than 400 acres of permanent and temporary construction impacts from private to public lands, and otherwise substantially reduce the effects of the project on Delta residents.

In response to landowner concerns, DWR is making the changes to the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP), a seven-year effort of federal and state agencies and other stakeholders to stabilize water deliveries from the Delta while enhancing the Delta's ecosystem, the largest estuary on the West Coast.

The changes announced Thursday include:

- shrinking the new intermediate forebay from 750 acres to 40 surface acres and shifting its location away from the towns of Hood and Courtland and closer to Interstate 5;
- realigning a segment of the proposed twin tunnels several miles to the east to lands owned by a private non-profit group on Staten Island, away from the Pearson District, Brannan Island, and Walnut Grove;
- shortening the main tunnels from 35 miles to 30 miles;
- using DWR-owned properties south of Hood as a construction staging area and DWR-owned properties near Interstate 5 as a re-usable tunnel material storage area;
- decreasing from 151 to 81 the number of structures affected by the project;
- reducing from 60 feet to 30 feet the height of the intake pumping plants along the Sacramento River by relying on a mobile crane rather than a permanent gantry crane inside each building;
- reducing from seven to five the number of tunnel launch/retrieval shaft locations;
- eliminating borrow pit areas north of Hood and reducing the staging area from 400 acres to 200 acres;
- working with landowners and stakeholders to use excavated material to improve and preserve wildlife habitat on Zacharias Ranch on Glanville Tract and on Staten Island; and
- modifying and strengthening the existing Clifton Court Forebay for improved operations of north and south Delta conveyance.

In all, the recent project refinements would shrink the permanent water conveyance project footprint from 3,654 acres to 1,851 acres (not including several sites where tunnel material would be stored temporarily). The amount of

privately-owned land affected either temporarily or permanently would decrease by from 5,965 acres to 5,557 acres. Use of public lands for the conveyance project would more than double, from 240 acres to 657 acres.

“We take seriously the effects our proposal would have on the property and daily lives of Delta residents,” said DWR Director Mark Cowin. “We have worked hard to find ways to eliminate or modify some of the construction activity and permanent infrastructure in ways that minimize disruption to local residents. We’ll keep working to reduce impacts wherever possible, and we’re committed to mitigating those that are unavoidable.”

The proposed project seeks to accomplish goals set forth by the California Legislature in 2009: enhance the Delta ecosystem, improve the reliability of water supplies drawn from the Delta, and do so in a way that respects the unique character of the Delta. Federal and state water projects convey water from the Delta to help supply 25 million Californians and three million acres of irrigated farmland.

The plan seeks a 50-year permit to cover the Delta pumping of the State Water Project, operated by DWR in coordination with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation’s Central Valley Project, under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and under the California Natural Community Conservation Planning Act.

The administrative draft plan, available at www.baydeltaconservationplan.com, describes a proposal to build a new conveyance system in the north Delta in order to reduce reliance on the existing pumps in the south Delta. The south Delta pumps, several decades old, directly trap fish and at times change channel flow in ways that confuse migratory fish. The BDCP proposes construction of three new intakes on a stretch of the Sacramento River near Hood. Twin tunnels as deep as 150 feet would convey water to the existing pumping plants in the south Delta near Tracy. From there, water would be lifted into the canals that supply Southern California, the Santa Clara Valley, and the San Joaquin Valley.

Twenty-one other conservation measures in the BDCP are aimed at improving conditions for 57 different species in the Delta, including the Chinook salmon, Delta smelt, white sturgeon, green sturgeon, longfin smelt, sandhill crane, and giant garter snake. Those measures include protection or restoration of 145,000 acres of Delta habitat over 50 years.

The draft BDCP and a corresponding environmental analysis consider different ways to convey water from the Delta. No final decisions have been made on which alternative will be selected by federal and state agencies. A public review draft of both the plan and environmental documents will be released in October.

The proposed project analyzed in the documents has changed significantly in the last two years in response to concerns from state and federal wildlife agencies. The capacity of the proposed north Delta intakes has been downsized from a maximum of 15,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 9,000 cfs. The number of intakes along the Sacramento River has dropped from five to three, and the proposal has been modified to flow by gravity from the intermediate forebay to main forebay, rather than by pumping. This change would greatly reduce energy costs and emissions and eliminate the need for some power lines and an intermediary pumping plant.

The changes to the proposal announced Thursday are in part the result of discussions with landowners and residents in response to local concerns. They are also the result of a process called “optimization”—typical of large construction projects—in which engineers and planners refine projects to achieve better effectiveness and higher efficiency.

To help Delta citizens and community members who need additional information or would like to offer input on the BDCP, DWR will hold in-Delta office hours in September at local libraries. Details will be posted at www.baydeltaconservationplan.com.

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