



### **Delta Counties Coalition**

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*"Working together on water and Delta issues"*

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **DCC Joins Coalition of Water Stakeholders United to Oppose State Water Agency Attempt to Green Light Unlimited Delta Tunnel Spending**

SACRAMENTO, CA— A regionally diverse coalition of Northern California counties, water resource management and flood control agencies, as well as environmental and taxpayer groups are challenging the California Department of Water Resources' (DWR) ability to issue an unlimited amount of bonds to finance its latest Delta tunnel project. Like its predecessor, which was rejected by Governor Newsom, the latest tunnel project would divert water from the Sacramento River near Freeport out the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta for export to portions of the Bay Area, South San Joaquin Valley and Southern California.

Delta Counties Coalition (DCC) members (Counties of San Joaquin, Contra Costa, Solano, Yolo and Sacramento) along with Contra Costa County Water Agency, County of Butte, County of Plumas, and Plumas County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, and Sacramento County Water Agency, filed answers opposing DWR's premature and prejudicial attempt to impose unbounded revenue bond obligations to finance the risky Delta tunnel, which tunnel proponents recently estimated could cost as much as \$21 billion. The answers respond to a lawsuit DWR filed against every California resident in August seeking a court order to "validate" the bond financing scheme by declaring it legal.

The groups seek a court order rejecting DWR's authority to issue the bonds. Among other grounds, these efforts seek to force DWR to secure any funding directly from the tunnel proponents, as contemplated by the Legislature in the Delta Reform Act.

In their answers, the Delta Counties and their allies contend that the Delta tunnel bond funding is premature since DWR has not conducted the required environmental review, and essential details of the project and its financing remain undefined, unapproved or both. They also note that DWR's bond plans fail to ensure that only tunnel beneficiaries would pay project costs, as state law requires, and would burden State Water Project ratepayers and property tax payers with decades of debt for little benefit.

Representatives from the counties filing answers to DWR's validation complaint explained:

"Sacramento County is ground zero for the devastation that will occur along the Sacramento River as a result of the Delta tunnel. If approved and constructed, the tunnel project would not only impact County residents, the environment, public facilities and water systems in the Delta, but it would threaten the sustainability of surface and groundwater supplies throughout the County," said Sacramento County Supervisor Patrick Kennedy.

"Rather than reimagining its response to climate change, as Governor Newsom directed, DWR is doubling down on an idea we have known for decades will never work and that has consistently been rejected by the citizens of California. DWR refuses to pursue alternatives that could provide safe water supplies while protecting the health of

the Delta, such as improved through-Delta conveyance, increased regional supplies, conservation, and water use efficiency, as well as reducing reliance on the Delta in meeting California's future water supply needs, as required by the Delta Reform Act," said San Joaquin County Supervisor Chuck Winn.

"We believe it's premature to secure bond authority to pay for a tunnel project that has not been approved and its costs are not yet known to the public. We are asking the court to deny this request for what amounts to a blank check. We need to unite around reliable water solutions that are good for all Californians." said Supervisor Oscar Villegas from Yolo County.

"California has been devastated by COVID-19 and a subsequent multi-billion dollar budget deficit along with horrific wildfires that have displaced thousands of Californians. DWR's attempt to force ratepayers and tax payers to open their wallets for literally unlimited spending on the Delta tunnel will only cause more financial harm to people already on the brink. Where are the State's priorities? Certainly not with the people who are really hurting right now," said Supervisor Karen Mitchoff, Contra Costa County.

"The whole state should be wary of financing a project with no cap on costs, high construction risks, and an unknown timetable without environmental review or permitting. Californians value the importance of a reliable water supply, but with so many other options like increasing storage capacity, water reuse, recycling and desalination, why does the State still want to force a tunnel on us that will cause serious environmental harm and not provide any new water? It makes no sense," said Solano County Supervisor Skip Thomson.

In addition to the Delta Counties, several other entities are also opposing or are expected to oppose DWR's validation action including:

Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, Restore the Delta, Friends of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and Planning and Conservation League, City of Yuba City, Central Delta Water Agency, South Delta Water Agency, California Water Impact Network, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, North Coast Rivers Alliance, Winnemem Wintu Tribe, Institute for Fisheries Resources, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, and San Francisco Crab Boat Owners Association, among others.