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Saying the Department of the Interior seems to be favoring water buyers from Southern California and the San Joaquin Valley, Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Pleasanton, is demanding a level playing field in putting together the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan, the document that will help govern California's major water supply for the next century.

"The Bay Delta Plan has moved forward without the input of the people of the Delta communities. The farmers, families and businesses in the Delta stand to lose their livelihoods and way of life if water is stolen from our backyard," says Mr. McNerney.

His district includes a large portion of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Interior is currently taking comments about a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) relating to the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP). Mr. McNerney and other members of Congress from the region want the Interior Department to rescind the document, contending that it was developed behind closed doors and that it gives water export agencies south of the Delta and in Southern California unprecedented influence over an important public process concerning California's limited fresh water supplies.

"We have to have a clean, healthy Delta. Any plan that includes a canal would turn our Delta into a salty marsh, costing the community millions of dollars and countless jobs," says Mr. McNerney.

The state Department of Water Resources has been making test borings in portions of the Delta where they've been allowed on private land. The borings are thought to be related to plans for a massive canal around or through the Delta to take water from the Sacramento River before it enters the Delta and ship it to customers south of the Delta. In an alternative, a massive tunnel

beneath the Delta is also under consideration as what the state dubs a “conveyance.”

In a letter Tuesday to the Bureau of Reclamation to be included as part of the public comment, Mr. McNerney calls for an extension of the comment period and for the Interior Department to rescind support for the MOA.

“I hope that state and federal policy makers will seize this opportunity to make major changes to the BDCP. As the MOA illustrates, the current BDCP and its focus on constructing a massive peripheral canal or similar system will benefit south-of-Delta water users at the expense of Delta communities,” he says.

“Better alternatives exist to the BDCP’s deeply flawed proposals for a canal or tunnel system, but they will only receive the consideration they deserve if the MOA is rescinded and the BDCP is transformed into a process that is fair, transparent, and places the best needs of the Delta on par with other interests,” Mr. McNerney says.