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- Call the current delay the 'the last, best opportunity' to improve the plan
- Too many back-door deals, says congressman

The Bay Delta Conservation Plan, which could shape the course of California's history through the rest of the century and beyond, must be fair and equitable, say a group of California members of Congress.

The state has delayed releasing the controversial plan. On May 4, the Natural Resources Agency announced that environmental review documents for the Bay Delta Conservation Plan will not be ready for release by the end of June as originally planned.

Calling the most recent BDCP delay the "last, best opportunity to stand up to... unreasonable demands," Reps. Jerry McNerney, George Miller, Mike Thompson, Doris Matsui, and John Garamendi, are demanding specific steps be taken for the plan to move forward in a fair and transparent manner.

The five members from the California congressional delegation have been vocal in calling for changes to the BDCP and have demanded that any plan has significant input from the Bay-Delta region.

"We recognize that some are now calling for an immediate decision, but we believe that it is critical to get this right; a rushed and inadequate Bay-Delta planning effort will lead to increased litigation, uncertainty, and expense," they say in letters sent Wednesday to Gov. Jerry Brown and Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar.

“I will not accept any plan for the Delta that is harmful to the farmers, families, and small business owners in the Delta region. To date, the planning process for Delta water has been unduly influenced by wealthy water contractors from south of the Delta who would steal our water, costing us millions of dollars and countless jobs,” says Mr. McNerney.

“This delay provides an opportunity for the state and federal governments to stand up to the water contractors and ensure that the BDCP includes the input of our region,” he says.

Mr. Miller says that more than five years into the process, the Bay Delta Conservation Plan still hasn't met basic legal or scientific requirements.

“This is the last chance to fix it, and that's why this delay is so important: it gives the scientists time to get it right,” says Mr. Miller. “The Bay-Delta's health is key to California's future – we can either work out a good plan that reduces reliance on the Delta, or we can end up with increased litigation, uncertainty, and expense.”

Mr. Thompson says there have been too many back-door deals that put the interests of South-of-Delta water contractors before all others.“

Many of our families and small businesses that depend on the Delta would have their livelihood stripped away and the Delta's diverse wildlife would be destroyed if these politically driven deals were put in place,” Mr. Thompson says. “Federal and state officials need to use this delay to come up with fair and transparent plan that is based on sound science so that our communities, businesses, fish, wildlife and environment in the Delta and north of the Delta are not harmed.”

Ms. Matsui says the plan must reflect due diligence and equitable treatment to all those affected. “I want to see the federal and state agencies take this opportunity to put forward a process and a plan for the Delta region that recognizes the input they've received not just from south of Delta interests, but north of Delta interests as well. Our state can't afford to get this wrong,” she says.

Mr. Garamendi says that in addition to using the best available science, “we must focus on

conservation, storage, and recycling to preserve our state's ecosystems and to meet the water needs of nearly 40 million Californians."