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- Say it needs thorough cost-benefit analysis
- 'A massive water diversion facility that could destroy the entire Delta'

A more thorough and statewide cost-benefit analysis is needed before the state and federal governments sign off on the controversial Bay Delta Conservation Plan and its massive water tunnels, says a group of California members of Congress.

In a letter to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar; Acting Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank; California Gov. Jerry Brown; and California Natural Resources Agency Secretary Melvin Laird, the eleven federal lawmakers point out what they see as serious deficiencies in a recent benefit analysis conducted by David Sunding for state officials on whether a planned “conveyance facility” would be large enough for water exporters.

“Conveyance facility” is wonk-speak for either twin tunnels beneath the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta or a peripheral canal around it. Either system would take fresh water from the Sacramento River before it enters the Delta and ship it to state and federal irrigation system pumps near Tracy.

“Sunding’s analysis was incomplete at best, and the project Dr. Sunding analyzed threatens water districts, fishermen, agriculture, landowners, and other stakeholders in Northern California by assuming massive increases in water exports and regulatory assurances that would shift the mitigation burden to other water rights holders,” the letter says.

They say even the smallest conveyance facility considered in Mr. Sunding’s analysis would present an unacceptable danger to the ecologically vulnerable Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, Delta and northern California water users, and the regional economy that the Delta supports.“

The BDCP process is heading toward the creation of a massive water diversion facility that could destroy the entire Delta,” says Rep. John Garamendi, D-Walnut Grove. “The only protection against this catastrophe is existing water rights and environmental laws at the federal and state levels, which the House of Representatives has already voted to completely overturn with the disastrous HR 1837. Instead of moving headlong on this dangerous course, we must develop an overarching water vision for California that includes critical improvements for the Delta’s levee infrastructure, coupled with increased water recycling, conservation, and storage.”

Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Stockton, says the interests of the people who rely on the Delta for their livelihoods have been ignored.

“Now we see through clear scientific proof that any plan that includes a canal will devastate the region, costing millions of dollars and countless jobs. We need a plan that will do right by the families, farmers and small business owners who call the Delta home,” says Mr. McNerney. “To knowingly destroy the resource that a vast amount of people rely on is completely unacceptable.”

And Rep. Pete Stark, D-Fremont, says the present Bay Delta Conservation Plan “is a recipe for disaster for Northern California’s economy, the health of the Delta, and the future of our fisheries.”

Signing the letter were Messrs. Garamendi, McNerney, Stark as well as Reps. George Miller, Mike Thompson, Doris Matsui, Lynn Woolsey, Barbara Lee, Sam Farr, Jackie Speier, and Anna Eshoo.

This is at least the third such joint letter from the members of Congress to Mr. Salazar. The lawmakers say the bureaucrat has not deigned to answer their earlier letters.