



Sierra Club California Supports Sensible Alternatives to the Bay- Delta Giant Tunnels

The Giant Tunnels will not solve California's water challenges.

The Brown administration proposes to build a costly pair of giant tunnels to divert Sacramento River water bound for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. They would transport water directly to Central Valley farms and urban users in the Bay Area and Southern California. Sierra Club supports robust alternatives to the tunnels that would provide better long-term water security for all Californians and would have fewer negative environmental impacts.

A healthy Delta is essential to California's financial and environmental future.

- The Bay-Delta ecosystem is collapsing partly because of excessive water diversions.
- The Bay Delta Conservation Plan, which includes the two 30-mile-long, 4-story-diameter tunnels, would accelerate the decline of the largest estuary on the west coast, which provides essential habitat for native and migratory species.
- Salmon runs that rely on a healthy Delta support a billion-dollar commercial salmon industry as well as a valuable recreational fishing economy in rural communities.
- The giant tunnels would ultimately reduce California's water security by increasing dependence on unreliable water imports for many farmers and urban dwellers.

The tunnels are a risky and expensive proposition for California.

- The tunnels would provide a false sense of water security and encourage unsustainable use of water in cities and farms across the state.
- This project would burden Californians with an enormous financial commitment without guaranteeing any additional water for agriculture or urban areas. In dry years like 2014 – which scientists predict may become the norm due to our changing climate – there may not be enough water to move through the tunnels.
- If we gamble \$67 billion on building the giant tunnels, there will not be enough money to invest in local solutions that would improve water security throughout the state and create local jobs through investment in smaller infrastructure projects.

There are better ways to address California's water challenges.

Support Regional Solutions to Improve Water Security

Improve Water Independence, Create Jobs and Reduce Environmental Impacts

- **Encourage urban uptake of water efficient technologies.** Landscaping uses roughly half of residential water. Replacing thirsty lawns with drought tolerant landscaping, installing smart irrigation technology, using rainwater and graywater, and promoting aggressive rebate programs for efficient appliances could reduce urban water use by 30%.
- **Maintain existing infrastructure.** About 10% of urban water is lost through leaks in aging distribution infrastructure, wasting energy and precious water.
- **Require statewide water meters and detailed usage reports for consumers.** California should accelerate the timeline for every home and business to have a dedicated water meter. Cities currently have until 2025 to complete this process. In an East Bay pilot study, home usage reports led to a 6.6% reduction in water use.
- **Promote water recycling.** Recycling municipal wastewater could save up to 2.3 million acre-feet annually, according to the Department of Water Resources. A successful water recycling program already exists in Orange County.
- **Improve agricultural water efficiency.** Agriculture uses 75 to 80 percent of California's water. Agricultural conservation strategies—including weather-based irrigation controllers, drip irrigation and climate-appropriate crop selection—could yield over 3.4 million acre-feet in water savings.
- **Manage groundwater sustainably.** California is one of the few states in the nation that does not regulate groundwater, which has led to unsustainable levels of overdraft, damage to aquifer storage capacity, and dramatic land subsidence.
- **Require water-neutral development.** SB610 and SB221 require proof of available water supply for new development projects. These laws should be strengthened to more effectively prevent unsustainable growth.

These and other measures could reduce statewide water demand by 9.7 Million acre feet/year. That's more water than is exported from the Delta even in rainy years.

Sierra Club California supports common-sense alternatives to the costly giant tunnels gamble.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.sierraclubcalifornia.org>