

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 25, 2015

The Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

We appreciate your office extending the public comment period for the updated environmental review documents for the California “WaterFix” tunnels plan. Although we are continuing to review project documents, we have identified a number of serious concerns that we would like to address at this time. We understand that your administration is moving forward with the WaterFix tunnels plan, but we still believe that these multibillion-dollar tunnels fail to increase water supply, devastate an already fragile ecosystem, and divert funding from more effective statewide water solutions for California.

In a time of severe drought, we need to conserve water and augment our water supply throughout the entire state. If the tunnels are constructed, not a single drop of new water will be added to California’s water supply. Additionally, the tunnels would take thousands of acres of farmland out of production in the Delta area and potentially impair properties around the region through eminent domain. Other negative impacts of the proposed tunnels plan include the depletion of essential freshwater from the Delta estuary and groundwater supplies; and the degradation of water quality for farmers, cities, and wildlife, including further saltwater intrusion.

To date, your administration has yet to provide a viable financial plan for the tunnels. WaterFix environmental documents show that building the tunnels will yield less than 200,000 acre-feet of water annually for Central Valley farmers. These farmers will be responsible for the project’s estimated cost of \$10 billion, or over \$150,000 per acre. Independent economists estimate the tunnels’ water yield will cost around \$3,000 per acre-foot.

As a result, Central Valley farmers will pay a steep increase in costs without a real return in water, Delta farming operations could be severely disrupted, and Delta and Northern California communities will no longer be guaranteed substantial environmental restoration efforts. “WaterFix” and “EcoRestore” require a much smaller restoration effort than the original Bay Delta Conservation Plan so many of the previous benefits that were described by your administration no longer apply. To clarify these concerns, we request that your administration issue an official cost-benefit analysis along with a viable financial plan that will provide crucial information to affected stakeholders.

Although we remain concerned about the WaterFix tunnels plan, we appreciate the drought relief proposals that were included in your California Water Action Plan such as conservation, recycling, increased efficiency, and storage. These cost-effective solutions will benefit the entire state for years to come. Your administration has stated that the tunnels are only one part of a comprehensive plan, but the construction and operation of WaterFix will misdirect a substantial amount of funding away from these forward thinking solutions California desperately needs to pursue.

The WaterFix plan's costs appear to severely outweigh its benefits, while causing irreparable harm to Delta and Northern California communities who thus far have not been adequately included in project negotiations. We urge you to move away from the flawed WaterFix tunnels plan and implement the cost-effective policy solutions already outlined in your California Water Action Plan like conservation, recycling, increased efficiency, and storage that will ensure sustainable water supplies for a healthy Delta ecosystem and California's farmers and communities statewide. We look forward to continue working with you on innovative solutions that effectively address California's drought crisis.

Sincerely,



JERRY MCNERNEY
Member of Congress



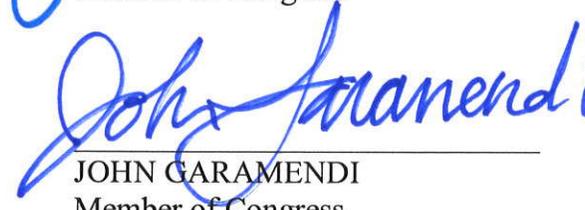
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