



WE Watch

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WE Watch Urges Local Water Providers to Opt-Out of Costly Delta Conveyance Project

A Santa Ynez Valley non-profit, WE Watch, has sent letters to local agencies involved in providing water to Valley residents, urging each agency to opt-out of participation in the newly proposed "Delta Conveyance Project" (DCP). As recently proposed by Governor Newsom, the DCP would move State Water Project (SWP) water from northern California rivers through a new tunnel under the California Delta to connect to the California aqueduct. Local water agencies that currently manage or receive SWP water would continue to receive their current allocation of SWP water while opting-out of participation in, and payment for, the costly new DCP.

The WE Watch letter, dated 9/17/19, was sent to: Buellton, Solvang, Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District ID-1, and the Central Coast Water Agency (CCWA). Over the coming months each of those water agencies and the County, as the SWP's contract holder in Santa Barbara County, will be asked to decide whether to opt-in or opt-out of participation in the DCP.

WE Watch's objections to the DCP are based on several concerns, including some cited by Governor Newsom when he cancelled the State's previously proposed project for two tunnels under the Delta. These concerns are:

- The DCP would be very expensive, with CCWA's up-front cost estimated by CCWA to be in the \$152 million range. Those costs would directly pass through to those agencies which receive state water in Santa Barbara County. Solvang and Buellton's share of the costs would each be in the \$3 to \$4 million range, while ID#1 would be approximately \$11 to \$12 million. WE Watch believes less expensive alternatives exist for providing water, as well as mitigating for water quality, earthquake damage, and sea level rise.
- The DCP won't necessarily improve the reliability of SWP water delivery. As evident during the past decade, the reliability of SWP water allocations is inherently highly variable and unpredictable from year to year, mainly due to annual variations in precipitation. How can you possibly expect water reliability when statewide water allocation quantities are five times greater than is available in a typical California water year? These allocations equate to paper water.
- The DCP will continue, rather than mitigate, adverse environmental impacts in the Delta. By reducing ground-level water flow, the DCP will undoubtedly harm endangered species and further degrade habitats, water quality, and the healthy farming and recreational economies of the Delta.
- The State's estimates of the DCP's costs and water supplies are questionable. In the past, the State has tended to over-estimate water supplies from State projects, while under-estimating actual costs and project implementation schedules.

In its letter, WE Watch noted that its purpose as a non-profit is to work together with others to sustain and improve the environment of the Santa Ynez Valley, mainly by educating its members and the community about environmental issues affecting the quality of life in the Santa Ynez Valley. More information about WE Watch can be found at its website: <https://www.we-watch.org/>

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