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Gov. Brown Sings from Mega-Growers' Hymnal, Tries to Bully Federal Scientists into Approving Tunnels State Mismanagement of Water helped cause shortage

Sacramento, CA- Restore the Delta (RTD), opponents of Gov. Brown's rush to build Peripheral Tunnels that would drain the Delta and doom salmon and other Pacific fisheries, today responded to Gov. Brown's statement Thursday that he urged President Obama to get federal scientists to suspend their expert judgment and approve his tunnels.

"It is outrageous that Governor Brown is using the drought to push the president to override federal biologists who think the water tunnels are too risky," said Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla. "The federal scientists are the only ones willing to stand up to special interests that want to violate the Public Trust, and transfer wealth from this region to mega irrigators with toxic soils on the west side that are last in the water bucket line."

"The governor has bullied the state scientists into going along with him, but he has not yet cowed the federal experts into disregarding their conclusions and agreeing that Gov. Brown's tunnels are a solution to our water challenges," said Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, executive director of RTD. "What's remarkable is that Gov. Brown is using nearly the exact same language as the Westlands Water District. Clearly, he is carrying their water at the expense of the rest of us."

We have had three dry years in a row and the governor admits the tunnels won't add one drop of water to our drought-plagued state. We need solutions more appropriate to our future water challenges, not this \$60 billion mega-project that would misspend the billions needed for sustainable water solutions."

"The better approach would be to invest wisely in projects that actually produce new water and local jobs. California needs more water recycling projects, such as Orange County's that is producing enough water for 600,000 residents each year. By cleaning up groundwater, we will create another new supply and room to store water when it is truly available," said Barrigan-Parrilla.

Instead of operating in a manner that plans for regular droughts, the State Water Projects deplete storage under the theory that they should 'take it while it's there,' and they thereby make the dry year shortages even worse. This past year the State pumped over 800 thousand acre-feet (TAF) more than it had promised, making the water shortage worse, and compliance with water quality and fishery standards impossible."

The language used by the Governor is right from the Westlands Water District script. Excerpts below are from a recent Westlands Board meeting. Westlands General Manager Tom Birmingham, Harris Ranch, Westlands Water District Board Meeting 1-15-2014.

@ 43:03 Transcript Pg 4: Tom Birmingham "They [the state] say this is going to work just fine. And yet, you've got biologists in the federal agencies—not people in political positions or even management positions—we've got biologists who are saying 'we still don't know if this is going to work. There's too much risk associated with it'."

[44:25]

"So it's very exasperating. But again, if these issues are not resolved, we're done. That message is being sent very clearly to the federal agencies." Pg 4.

....The basic problem is that every time you complete a stage, the federal agencies—the biologists in those federal agencies—say, 'We need more analysis. We need more analysis.' They don't want an agency decision." @pg 4

KCRA-TV (Sacramento, NBC) report (1/30/2014; 6:05 pm)
Gov. Jerry Brown "lower level [Federal] officials" aren't being helpful in fact, quite the opposite."

Bill Jennings, Executive Director of the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, said, "The present crisis could have been avoided, and is a direct result of egregious mismanagement of the state's water supply system by the state and federal water projects. Excessive water exports and the failure to prepare for inevitable drought have created a decades-long disaster for fisheries, and placed the people and economic prosperity of northern California at grave risk. The State's obsession with tunneling under the Delta does nothing to address drought, or put us on a path to correct the misuse of limited water supplies."

John Herrick, Restore the Delta board member and Counsel and Manager of the South Delta Water Agency, said, "The failure of the State Water Projects to plan ahead contributed to the current water shortage. Last winter and spring the projects were concerned about not having enough water to meet fishery or agricultural standards, and so sought changes in their permits to allow for the relaxation of those standards. At the same time, they projected the amount of

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water available for export. As soon as the projections were released, they began to pump MORE water than they projected; thus taking the water needed for fish and endangering future allocations for all purposes. If this had not been allowed, the reservoirs would have 800+ TAF more storage in them than they currently do.”

“The Urgency Petition process is for actual, unforeseeable emergencies,” said Herrick. “The State has known since at least September that we might be facing a horrible water supply year due to the lack of precipitation during the first 9 months of 2013. Knowing that reservoir levels were getting very low, and that the prior year had insufficient water for fish and water quality standards, the projects simply waited to see what would happen. Not until the very last minute did they file their Urgency Petition. Urgency Petitions require no public notice or input, but must be based on a finding that the petitioner exercised due diligence in getting the permit change under the normal petition process if possible. Since the projects have known for months that this scenario was facing them, they should have made their petition months ago. But that would have resulted in public notice, public hearing and input by the interests who depend on the current standards being met. It appears that, as in the past, the projects manipulated the process to make sure there was no official opposition to their requests to violate the water quality standards. Worse, it appears the regulators (SWRCB staff) were working with the regulated projects outside of the public purview to make sure the petition remained unknown. Therefore, there was no contrary data submitted to contradict the pre-agreed to order granting the petition. What would have been the findings of the SWRCB Board if the information of the projects taking too much water last season were in the record?”

Restore the Delta is a 15,000-member grassroots organization committed to making the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta fishable, swimmable, drinkable, and farmable to benefit all of California. Restore the Delta works to improve water quality so that fisheries and farming can thrive together again in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

www.restorethedelta.org