Public Comments received re Purchase of Delta Wetlands Properties

April 28, 2016
Board of Directors  
Metropolitan Water District of So. Calif.

I live in Southern California and I do not support plans to buy Delta islands, some of which will be destroyed, to build a huge tunnel system fraught with all sorts of problems, from financial to environmental.

I don't want ecosystems destroyed for my water, especially when all other options haven't been utilized, and I certainly don't want to pay for it with even higher fees.

I see water wasted all the time. We need to be putting our limited resources into saving water (smart faucets, toilets, shower heads to start) before burdening citizens with such expensive, damaging projects.

Sincerely,
Tena Scruggs  
Escondido, California
To: Office of the Board of Directors  
Dawn Chin  
(213) 217-6291  

Dear Metropolitan District Board Members,

I am writing to ask you to reconsider your recent vote to purchase four islands in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. We ask that you look at the dissenting votes of Los Angeles, San Diego, and Santa Monica -- water districts that recognize that real water security for Southern California will be achieved through conservation, storm water capture, recycling, local infrastructure upgrades, and new water technologies that will put more water back in the system.

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Developing regional self-reliance is the best way to provide a more reliable water supply. This requires investment in water conservation; maximizing waste water reuse and groundwater recharge; while capturing storm water and gray water, and fixing leaky pipes.

The Los Angeles-based nonprofit *Economic Roundtable* found that investments in water conservation create large numbers of jobs that pay sustaining wages, while reducing dependence on large, statewide diversion projects that have adverse environmental impacts.

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Does it make financial sense for Metropolitan Water District to spend $200 million to purchase land to support an infrastructure project that will not meet Southern California’s water needs?

Sincerely,

Russ Lester

Sent from Russ's iPad
I oppose the use of Ad Valorem parcel taxes for CA WaterFix expenses. (The Delta tunnels are misnamed by the State as CA WaterFix.) I oppose the project because science shows that the Delta tunnels will not deliver any additional water to Southern California rate payers, and I oppose taxation to subsidize corporate agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley. Also, the CA WaterFix website states that no additional water will be delivered by the $17 billion project. Rather than spending $175 million dollars to begin buying up the largest estuary on the west coast of the Americas through the Delta islands purchase, I prefer that those funds be used toward promoting regional self sufficiency projects for Southern California: recycling, groundwater cleanup, stormwater capture -- projects that will actually make more water for urban residents.

With Sincere Respect,
Mr. Robert Soto
La Quinta, CA 92253
From: Preston Thompson [mailto:preston_thompson@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 07, 2016 3:11 AM
To: Chin,Dawn
Subject: Re: Met’s Purchase of Delta Land

To: Office of the Board of Directors

Dawn Chin
(213) 217-6291
dchin@mwdh2o.com

Re: Metropolitan Water District of Southern California votes to buy 20,000 acres of island farmland in Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta

Dear Metropolitan District Board Members,

I am writing to ask you to reconsider your recent vote to purchase four islands in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. We ask that you look at the dissenting votes of Los Angeles, San Diego, and Santa Monica -- water districts that recognize that real water security for Southern California will be achieved through conservation, storm water capture, recycling, local infrastructure upgrades, and new water technologies that will put more water back in the system.

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Sincerely,

Preston Thompson

Livermore, Ca
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Sincerely,

Nicholas Greinert

Sent from ProtonMail, encrypted email based in Switzerland.
April 21, 2016

VIA EMAIL
Mr. Jeff Kightlinger
General Manager
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
P.O. Box 54153
Los Angeles, CA
90054-0153

RE: Metropolitan Water District’s acquisition of Delta islands.

Dear Mr. Kightlinger,

Our organizations have read with great interest about the Metropolitan Water District’s (MWD) acquisition of the “Delta Wetlands Properties” in the central Delta. MWD has indicated that its management plan for the islands is still in development. We want to encourage MWD to develop a management strategy that protects and promotes ecological values in the Delta through sound science and coordinated, integrated planning.

Our organizations have worked actively to conserve lands in the Delta for multiple habitat values, but we are particularly focused on how these lands are managed to protect habitat values for birds along the Pacific Flyway. Currently, little coordination exists in the management of both protected areas and agricultural operations in the Delta. Each manager struggles with meeting the competing demands of fish, migratory birds, agriculture, flood control, subsidence and the coming threats of rising sea-levels. Planning is typically done without any coordination with surrounding islands.

Everyone has a greater likelihood of success in the Delta if competing demands are identified and opportunities are shared and planned at a large landscape scale. The MWD acquisition of the islands provides an opportunity to develop a coherent management strategy of these particular parcels and integrate that management with other public and private lands in the Delta, including properties owned by the State of California, The Nature Conservancy, and other privately-held lands. Such an integrated strategy would help maximize habitat values, improve sustainable agriculture, and ensure long-term resilience in the region.
The Delta community has long expressed concerns about the state of the Delta and its future management. This purchase has heightened some of those concerns. Coordinated management of the Delta— including MWD lands – could improve conditions in the Delta instead of being perceived as a threat to existing land management practices.

An excellent first step would be to share scientific and technical information that will aid in planning and management. We would like to share scientific studies that we already have developed on terrestrial habitat values in the Delta and begin a discussion about further information needs that can inform how, together, we may maximize habitat and sustainability of agriculture and communities in the Delta. Such information needs include assessments of:

- The feasibility for different habitat restoration scenarios on the various islands now under consideration for restoration,
- The mix of habitat projects and sustainable agriculture provide the greatest positive impact on these islands,
- The greatest long-term opportunities for stewardship and resource conservation when looking at the complete package of public and private land in the Delta, and
- Actions that can be taken to address climate change vulnerability and develop best practices for agricultural land management, subsidence reversal, development of tule marsh (carbon sequestration) and other integrated strategies that can help protect these lands.

We propose to meet with you and others at the Metropolitan Water District to discuss how we can work towards a plan for the future of the Delta that is mutually beneficial and based on sound science. The MWD acquisition of these properties could provide the impetus to make an enormous difference in the health of the Delta, if we make the most of this opportunity. We feel it’s possible to provide enhanced roosting and feeding habitat for migratory birds, while preserving agriculture, capturing carbon and providing a world class wildlife experience that would boost the economy of the Delta communities. The time to act is now.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Dawit Zeleke
The Nature Conservancy

Mark Biddlecomb
Ducks Unlimited

Michael Lynes
Audubon California

Catherine Hickey
Point Blue Conservation Science
Dear Metropolitan District Board Members,

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Your own General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger told the Sacramento Bee following the vote that the four Delta islands in question will be used for staging construction of the Delta tunnels. But the EPA said last October 2015 that the tunnels project does not meet sound science standards and that according to recent admissions on the California Water Fix website will not result in any additional water for Southern California.

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Does it make financial sense for Metropolitan Water District to spend $200 million to purchase land to support an infrastructure project that will not meet Southern California's water needs?

Sincerely,

Mark Van Hoomissen
D Chin,

I was, until last July, a resident in Los Angeles for 68 years.
I now live in Oakley, Ca, in the heart of the CA Delta, on Sandmound Slough.
I look out of my back door onto Sandmound Slough, and, on the other side of the far levee, onto Holland Tract, one of the islands to be purchased. There is no way that turning that island, and the others being bought, into dirt depositories for the spoils from the By Tunnels will do anything but destroy what is, at present, a truly vibrant ecosystem.
I was opposed to the Bypass Tunnels when I lived in Los Angeles, and I'm still opposed, now that I live up here.
They are an expensive work-around that won't do any more than insure water flows south through the CA Aqueduct at the expense of the CA Delta estuary.
Labeling it as an Ad Valorem parcel tax for your Southern California rate payers is wrong. The urban rate payers shouldn't have to pay to insure that the farmers and water districts in the San Joaquin Valley had an uninterrupted water supply for their non-native nut orchards, whose crop they then export. This would be a terrible misuse of public money.
The farmers and water districts of the San Joaquin Valley receive a huge portion, 80-90%, of the water that flows south through the CA Aqueduct system, thanks to archaic water distribution laws that were passed when California's main economic force, and they receive that water at below delivery cost rates. So the CA taxpayers are already subsidizing their crops, which they export for huge profits.
We are, in reality, paying them to send our water overseas, and in the middle of a historic drought.
And the purchase of the farming tract islands in the Delta will only further degrade the largest estuary on the west coast, and is a waste of $175 million dollars that could be spent for local water works in SoCal, like desalination plants, groundwater cleanup, and stormwater capture projects, things that will, indeed, insure a supply of water to the urban areas and the people of Southern California.
I know there is big money involved in this whole business, but that doesn't make it right.
There is never a wrong time to do the right thing.

Mark Poulson
4882 Sandmound Blvd.
Oakley, CA 94561
(310) 908-9047
To: Office of the Board of Directors  
Dawn Chin  
(213) 217-6291  
dchin@mwdh2o.com

Re: Metropolitan Water District of Southern California votes to buy 20,000 acres of island farmland in Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta

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Sincerely,

Loren Whitcome

472-590 Debi Dr.

Susanville, CA 96130
To: Office of the Board of Directors  
Dawn Chin  
(213) 217-6291  
dchin@mwdh2o.com

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Sincerely,

Liz Ritchie  
Brentwood, CA 94513
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Best Regards,

signed by
Karen Klaczynski
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James Volberding
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Dawn Chin  
(213) 217-6291  
dchin@mwdh2o.com

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Sincerely,

Bob Teague

President, Teague Custom Marine Inc.

28115 Avenue Stanford, Valencia CA
March 17, 2016

Judy Abdo  
Board Member  
City of Santa Monica  
Metropolitan Water District Board of Directors  
(By e-mail only)

Dear Ms. Abdo,

Regarding financing challenges associated with the Delta tunnels, I urge you read a recent published post by Dr. Jeff Michael, Executive Director of the Center for Business and Policy Research at the University of the Pacific, and joint faculty member of the Eberhardt School of Business and Public Policy Program in the McGeorge School of Law.

On Dr. Michael's Valley Economy Blog you will find a post entitled, "What does Westlands SEC penalty mean for the delta tunnels plan (aka WaterFix)?":  
http://valleyecon.blogspot.com/2016/03/what-does-westlands-sec-penalty-mean.html, among other posts going back several years regarding the Delta tunnels. In addition, you will find his recent analysis of CA WaterFix's over statement of water deliveries.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at 209-479-2053 or by email Barbara@RestoretheDelta.org. Thank you for your time.

Yours in service,

Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla  
Executive Director  
Restore the Delta
March 21, 2016

Judy Abdo
Board Member
City of Santa Monica
Metropolitan Water District Board of Directors
(By e-mail only)

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Furthermore, now that it has been revealed that Met’s partner, Westlands Water District, has engaged in “Enron-style accounting practices” and has been fined for doing so by the SEC, counting on Westlands to acquire bond funding and to fulfill paying its 40% for the Delta tunnels project would be a significant financial risk for other project partners. It Met ready to make up Westlands’ share?
In fact, the CA WaterFix was recently caught engaging in its own creative water accounting practices. As Dr. Jeff Michael, Executive Director of the Center for Business and Policy Research, Eberhardt School of Business, University of the Pacific, wrote on his Valley Economy Blog:

They [WaterFix] create a website full of deceptive numbers with eye-catching graphics and giant bold numbers saying it will increase water diversions and storage, and then buried in a complex paragraph at the bottom of the page you find a sentence that says that the tunnels don't actually increase water supplies.

“Unbelievable” declares Dr. Michael, incredulously.

It is not just Restore the Delta who has expressed concern recently about Met’s purchase of the Delta islands and insistence on moving forward the Delta tunnels, even though a fully developed financing plan for the project does not exist. Editorials on the island purchase and/or the SEC fine of Westlands can be found at the San Francisco Chronicle, Stockton Record, San Jose Mercury News, Contra Costa Times, and Modesto Bee.

Nevertheless, Restore the Delta’s opposition to the project is not based solely on not wanting tunnels in the Delta. Having lived for years in Southern California, we sincerely want to work with others throughout the state to find real solutions to California’s water challenges. We are one state, and we fear that Met is on the brink of saddling itself with years of large debt for no new water.

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Conservation costs just $210 per acre-foot of water according to the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation. New conveyance and surface storage water projects cost between $760 to $2000 per acre-foot of water.

In Southern California, 2.7 million acre-feet of treated waste water – which could be used for irrigation – is dumped into the ocean annually. Treating and reusing urban waste water, gray water, and storm water can generate an additional 2 million acre-feet per year by 2030 and provide long-lasting employment.

The Water Replenishment District of Southern California recently unveiled plans for a water purification plant that would make the district entirely self-reliant on local water. Furthermore, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power’s Urban Water Management Plan for 2010 set a goal of using 35 percent less imported water in Los Angeles and have presented a detailed plan.

Does it make financial sense for Metropolitan Water District to spend $200 million to purchase land to support an infrastructure project that will not meet Southern California's water needs?

Yours in service,

Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla
Executive Director
Restore the Delta