

## PUBLIC COMMENTS TO CALIFORNIA WATER-FIX PROGRAM NOW DUE BY OCTOBER 30, 2015

Mon Oct 5th, 2015 | Categories: *Environmental Law* | By *Bick Law LLP*

The comment period for California Water-Fix has been extended from August 31, 2015 to October 30, 2015. The two-month extension gives the public, government agencies, and independent scientists more time to consider refinements and changes made since last summer to the plan that seeks to secure California's water supplies and improve ecosystem conditions in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The Delta is the West Coast's largest estuary and is the hub of the state's water distribution system. It provides water to 25 million of California's 38 million residents and three million of roughly nine million irrigated acres of farmland. The Delta also harbors several threatened and endangered species.

In April 2015, the Brown Administration announced the change in its delta reform from the Bay Delta Conservation Plan to the California Water-Fix proposal, abandoning its previous approach to use a Natural Communities Conservation Plan to rehabilitate the delta. Through California Water-Fix, conveyance facilities will be permitted through the traditional Section 7 regulatory approach and habitat restoration will occur under a parallel program called California Eco Restore.

The delta is located at the juncture of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers and is the largest estuary on the West Coast. The proposed tunnels in the California Water-Fix proposal would be 40 feet wide and 35 miles long from Elk Grove south of Sacramento continuing south to Clifton Court Forebay. The tunnels will be dug 150 feet below ground and will bypass the delta to divert fresh water from the Sacramento River to existing water-export pumps to canals heading south. The beneficiaries of the tunnels include the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which serves 17 million people, as well as farms and businesses.

The project is in a period of public comment from July 10, 2015 to October 30, 2015, on the environmental impact of the tunnels. In July 2015, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the California Department of Water Resources released modified portions of the draft joint Partially Re-circulated Draft Environmental impact Report /Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). While the re-circulated draft EIR/EIS analyzes several sub-alternatives, DWR and the Bureau are publicly backing the California Water-Fix proposal (sub-alternative 4A). The public comment period runs through October 30, 2015. Comments must be post-marked on or before October 30, 2015.

According to DWR Director, Mark Cowin, California Water-Fix would allow more flexibility in the movement of water "when and where it is safest for fish." California Water-Fix claims to fix an outdated 50-year old water supply infrastructure, prepare for climate change impacts, and rehabilitate and maintain fish and bird habitat. The project covers five main areas: water security, climate change adaptation, environmental protection, seismic safety, and affordability. The water delivery system would involve two tunnels, 150 feet below ground, plus three new intakes with 3,000 cubic-feet per second (cfs) capacity and an annual yield of 4.9 million acre-feet. Aging levees will be replaced, protecting against water supply disruption in the event of sea level rise, earthquakes, and flood events. The project would reinstate a more natural direction of flows in the South Delta and will improve outflows to the San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento River.

As part of California Water-Fix, environmental mitigation for construction and operation will include up to 2,300 acres of habitat restoration and up to 13,300 acres of habitat protection, including conservation easements. All habitat restoration and protection costs will be paid by water agencies benefiting by the project. Separate from the California Water-Fix, over the next five years, California's Eco Restore program will pursue more than 30,000 acres of critical delta restoration pursuant to pre-existing regulatory requirements including the 2008 and 2009 biological opinions and various enhancements to improve the overall health of the delta ecosystem.

Federal and state environmental agencies still must sign off, and opponents could file lawsuits to block construction.

If you would like to request a DVD copy of the RDEIR/SDEIS documents, email a request to [BDCPComments@icfi.com](mailto:BDCPComments@icfi.com), or go online to the BDCP website to locate a library near you where hard copies are available:

<http://baydeltaconservationplan.com/2015PublicReview/2015DocumentRepositories.aspx>. In addition hard copies are available at the Department of Water Resources and the Bureau of Reclamation:

Department of Water Resources\*

3500 Industrial Blvd., Room 117

West Sacramento, CA 95691

Bureau of Reclamation

MP100, 2800 Cottage Way

Sacramento, CA 95825

Additional information can be found at: [http://resources.ca.gov/docs/press\\_release/150722-Public\\_Comment\\_Period\\_on\\_Revised\\_Delta\\_Conveyance\\_Document.pdf](http://resources.ca.gov/docs/press_release/150722-Public_Comment_Period_on_Revised_Delta_Conveyance_Document.pdf)

How to Comment on the RDEIR/SDEIS

Mail to:

BDCP/California WaterFix Comments

P.O. Box 1919

Sacramento, CA 95812

Email to:

[BDCPComments@icfi.com](mailto:BDCPComments@icfi.com)

The mission of the California Department of Water Resources is to manage the water resources of California in cooperation with other agencies, to benefit the State's people, and to protect, restore, and enhance the natural and human environments. Visit DWR's website at [www.water.ca.gov](http://www.water.ca.gov).

The Bureau of Reclamation is the largest wholesale water supplier and the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the United States, with operations and facilities in 17 Western states. Its facilities also provide substantial flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits. Visit Reclamation's website at [www.usbr.gov](http://www.usbr.gov).