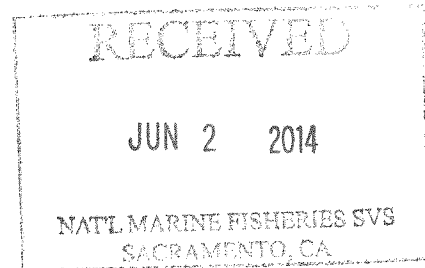




## San Diego County Water Authority

4677 Overland Avenue • San Diego, California 92123-1233  
(858) 522-6600 FAX (858) 522-6568 www.sdcwa.org

May 30, 2014



Mr. Ryan Wulff  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
650 Capitol Mall, Suite 5-100  
Sacramento, California 95814  
ATTN: BDCP Comments

### MEMBER AGENCIES

Carlsbad  
Municipal Water District  
  
City of Del Mar  
  
City of Escondido  
  
City of National City  
  
City of Oceanside  
  
City of Poway  
  
City of San Diego  
  
Fallbrook  
Public Utility District  
  
Helix Water District  
  
Lakeside Water District  
  
Olivenhain  
Municipal Water District  
  
Otay Water District  
  
Padre Dam  
Municipal Water District  
  
Camp Pendleton  
Marine Corps Base  
  
Rainbow  
Municipal Water District  
  
Ramona  
Municipal Water District  
  
Rincon del Diablo  
Municipal Water District  
  
San Dieguito Water District  
  
Santa Fe Irrigation District  
  
South Bay Irrigation District  
  
Vallecitos Water District  
  
Valley Center  
Municipal Water District  
  
Vista Irrigation District  
  
Yuma  
Municipal Water District

### OTHER REPRESENTATIVE

County of San Diego

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Bay Delta Conservation Plan, Alameda, Contra Costa, Sacramento, Solano and Yolo Counties, California

Dear Mr. Wulff:

The San Diego County Water Authority (Water Authority) is submitting the following comments on the joint Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared by the U.S Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), and U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service; the U.S Department of Commerce, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service; and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) for the proposed Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP). The BDCP has been developed to support issuance of long-term incidental take permits that meet the requirements of Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the federal Endangered Species Act, as well Section 2800 *et seq.* of the California Fish and Game Code, for certain actions proposed within the statutorily defined Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) for a term of 50 years.

The BDCP proposes to make physical and operational improvements to the State Water Project (SWP) system in the Delta necessary to restore and protect ecosystem health, water supplies of the SWP and Central Valley Project (CVP) south-of-Delta, and water quality within a stable regulatory framework, consistent with statutory and contractual obligations. This comprehensive species conservation strategy generally consists of 22 separate conservation measures that will contribute to the preservation and recovery of 56 species of plants and animals.

The Water Authority is a local governmental entity responsible for providing a safe and reliable imported water supply to 24 member agencies serving the San Diego region's \$191 billion economy and its approximately 3.1 million residents. The Water Authority, by State legislative mandate, is the authoritative expert on the San Diego regions' water supply reliability and long-term water supply planning. The Water Authority imports up to 90 percent of the water used in the San Diego region through

five larger diameter pipelines. The source of imported water is the SWP and Colorado River. Highly dependent on imported supplies, the Water Authority has historically and consistently been a strong advocate for the Delta and for the co-equal goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California, while protecting, restoring and enhancing the Delta ecosystem.

The Water Authority's goal for providing written comments is to ensure that the Final EIR/EIS, Final BDCP, and any resulting incidental take permits, provide a comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflicts between water supplies and ecosystems in the Delta that have made water supplies less reliable. However, the Water Authority is also convinced that any solution to Delta conflicts must be cost-effective, that the costs be shared equitably among beneficiaries of the improvements, and that beneficiaries be required to make firm commitments to pay their share of constructing and maintaining improvements to the Delta.

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

1. As has been noted in previous BDCP correspondence to the California Natural Resources Agency dated August 28, 2012, July 30, 2013, and October 7, 2013 (attached and incorporated as additional comments), the Water Authority remains concerned that the financing components of the BDCP have not been explicitly described. As the largest customer of the largest state water contractor – the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California – the Water Authority's ratepayers have a great deal at stake in the BDCP process and its financing plan. Chapter 8 of the current BDCP does not provide the detailed information necessary for potential participating agencies to evaluate individual agency cost-benefit (or feasibility) of the proposed project. The Final BDCP should contain details on: how participating water contractors intend to guarantee the revenue necessary to pay for the BDCP; the provisions for "step-up" should individual water contractor's default on funding obligations; and a legal analysis of relying on property taxes as a back-up security for project debt.
2. A necessary component that is missing from BDCP public review documents is the proposed Draft Implementing Agreement, which will be signed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Water Resources, and certain water contractors (Authorized Entities). Public review of this document is crucial to understanding exactly what assurances and commitments are being agreed to, and how the various financial and implementation obligations will be distributed among the signatories and, ultimately, ratepayers. The proposed Draft Implementing Agreement should be distributed for a minimum 60-day public review period. If necessary, the public comment period for the Draft EIR/EIS and BDCP documents should be extended, or re-opened, to include sufficient time for public review of the Implementing Agreement.

## DETAILED COMMENTS

### **Draft EIR/EIS Document**

#### Executive Summary

1. Page ES-6, Table ES-1 lists Lead, Cooperating, Responsible, and Trustee Agencies.

*Comment:* The table listing is incomplete. All water contractors will be required to consider the Final EIR as part of their decision to participate in BDCP implementation as permittees (Authorized Entities). The Final EIR/EIS should list the water contractors that must approve the Final EIR/EIS as responsible agencies.

2. Page ES-8, line 22 lists Mirant LLC as an applicant for an incidental take permit, yet a footnote states they are no longer an active participant.

*Comment:* To avoid confusion, all references to Mirant LLC as a BDCP participant should be deleted from the Final EIR/EIS.

#### Chapter 4 – Approach to Environmental Analysis

3. Page 4-4, line 33 states that the CEQA baseline consists of those “facilities and ongoing programs that existed as of February 13, 2009 (publication date of the most recent NOP...)”.

*Comment:* While this approach is consistent with CEQA Guidelines, the exclusive use of this baseline is confusing when the Draft EIR/EIS analysis is compared to the baseline and analysis presented in BDCP Chapter 9 (Economic Analysis Report). We understand that the development and use of these two very different baselines is for different purposes: one to meet CEQA requirements, and the other to reflect assumed additional, potentially severe, regulatory agency restrictions on water exports that will greatly affect the financial viability of the BDCP. However, the much more restrictive conditions in Chapter 9 could actually represent the future “without BDCP” based on preliminary indications from the regulatory agencies. It would be helpful if the Final EIR/EIS also included an impact analysis, for reference only, using a baseline that matched the conditions assumed in the BDCP Economic Analysis Report. This would allow easy comparisons of the potential environmental impacts of the less restrictive CEQA baseline to the more restrictive BDCP Economic Analysis baseline. Such a comparison would highlight the true potential impacts and benefits of the BDCP.

Chapter 30 – Growth Inducement and Other Indirect Effects

4. Page 30-126, line 19 states that “...unavoidable impacts would still be expected to occur”.

*Comment:* The basis for this statement is unclear. Neither DWR nor Reclamation have land use authority and cannot approve or deny development projects other than their own. Planning for, and approving, future public and private growth and development in areas served by SWP or CVP contractors is the responsibility of various land use agencies (e.g., cities or counties). The Draft EIR/EIS conclusion that unavoidable impacts would occur, especially when the location, magnitude, and timing of future development is unknown, is unsupported by the included information. The Final EIR/EIS should be revised to conclude that future development decisions are the responsibility of appropriate land use jurisdictions and that, in the absence of specific development proposals, it is speculative to make a determination as to the significance of environmental impacts resulting from any future growth in areas served by SWP and CVP contractors.

**Draft BDCP Document**

Chapter 1 – Introduction

5. Page 1-8, lines 23-25 state that “The BDCP is intended to meet the regulatory requirements for the issuance of Section 10 permits... to allow for the incidental take of the species... resulting from implementation of covered activities by DWR and certain SWP and CVP contractors (e.g., the Authorized Entities).”

*Comment:* It is unclear if SWP and CVP water contractors that decline to participate in BDCP implementation will continue to receive water under terms of existing contracts pursuant to existing Biological Opinions. It is also not clear if existing contractors deciding to “opt out” of the BDCP can obtain “third party beneficiary” status (and receive the benefits of HCP coverage) through a separate agreement with an entity that does receive a HCP take authorization through BDCP participation. The Final BDCP should explain what happens to any existing in-Delta Biological Opinions (e.g., remain in force, terminate, etc.) should the BDCP be approved, as well as the ability of non-participating entities to obtain HCP coverage through execution of side agreements with a BDCP permittee, or through a separate Section 7 consultation process.

6. Page 1-11, lines 17-18 state that “... DWR and certain water contractors are seeking permits from CDFW that authorize the take of species covered under the Plan...”

*Comment:* It is unclear if SWP and CVP water contractors that decline to participate in BDCP implementation will continue to receive water under terms of existing contracts pursuant to existing CESA authorizations. It is also not clear if existing contractors deciding to “opt out” of the BDCP can obtain “third

party beneficiary” status (and receive the benefits of NCCP coverage) through a separate agreement with an entity that does receive a NCCP take authorization through BDCP participation. The Final BDCP should explain what happens to any existing in-Delta CESA permits (e.g., remain in force, terminate, etc.) should the BDCP be approved, as well as the ability of non-participating entities to obtain NCCP coverage through execution of side agreements with a BDCP permittee, or through a separate Section 2081 permit process.

### Chapter 3 – Conservation Strategy

7. Page 3.4-2, line 26 states that a “structured scientific approach” will be taken to reduce uncertainty about the fall and spring outflow decision trees.

*Comment:* The specific timing and description of the research necessary to test the fall and spring outflow uncertainties is lacking. The process by which the decision tree outflow and export yield will be determined is important in understanding the value of the BDCP to water contractors. The Final BDCP should include a detailed description of the specific scientific research hypotheses, proposed methods, and schedule that will be undertaken to address the flow uncertainties incorporated into the decision tree.

8. Page 3.D-2, Table 3.D.1, CM1 Water Facilities Operation, Compliance Monitoring Action will “Document compliance with the operational criteria using flow monitoring and models implemented by the Implementation Office. [Details of monitoring to be developed...]”.

*Comment:* The details of compliance monitoring to document flow criteria are lacking. The importance of outflow monitoring cannot be overstated as it forms the basis for the decision tree export yield. The water contractors must have a clear understanding of the research deemed necessary to resolve the fall and spring outflow uncertainties. Stating that “details of monitoring to be developed” is inappropriate given its importance in helping frame whether water contractor participation in the BDCP is warranted. Outflow requirements are the most important issue for water contractors; to defer development of this essential research to a later time does not provide the information needed by water contractors to evaluate the science proposed to resolve decision tree uncertainty. The Final BDCP should provide greater detail on the likely magnitude and scope of research contemplated for the decision tree process.

9. Page 3.D-28, Table 3.D.3, CM1 Water Facilities Operation, Potential Research Actions states that “[Studies necessary to evaluate this uncertainty.... have not yet been determined.]”

*Comment:* Similar to Comment #7 above. The research necessary to determine the outcome of the decision tree is of the utmost importance to water

contractors. At a minimum, the general scope of these studies should be developed and included in the Final BDCP so water contractors can more fully evaluate the benefits and risks of participation.

#### Chapter 6 – Plan Implementation

10. Page 6-5, Table 6-2 provides a very aggressive implementation schedule for CM3 (24,396 acres), CM4 (19,150 acres), CM9 (98 acres), and CM10 (900 acres) during the near-term, especially the first 5 years.

*Comment:* The level of information included in the BDCP does not provide adequate support that restoration of these very large acreages can be achieved within the established time frames. For example, it is very difficult to envision how over 9,500 acres of tidal natural community restoration can be completed within 5 years given the time needed to properly plan, design, permit, and construct this habitat type. At a minimum, additional specific information on the location of identified parcels and conceptual design/planting plans for these near-term lands should be included in the BDCP and FEIR/EIS document to validate the assertion that these acreage targets can be achieved within the identified schedule. If the BDCP intends to rely on one or more interim action projects listed in Table 6-4 (page 6-14) to meet the implementation schedule, then the BDCP should identify those projects where a firm funding commitment has been, or will likely be made. Should restoration take longer than anticipated, legally binding assurances must be provided to permittees that water yields will not be reduced below the minimum described in the decision tree process.

11. Page 6-8, CM4 Tidal Natural Communities Restoration, states that the initial 4,000 acres will take “less time to plan and permit... because... is likely to be implemented first on public lands.”

*Comment:* We believe this timing assumption to be overly optimistic. The Water Authority’s experience for a 40 acre wetland restoration project on public land took three years just to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local approvals to commence construction. Because tidal natural community habitat type is critical to fish species being considered in the decision tree process, the BDCP and FEIR/EIS should examine the effects on ultimate BDCP success if a longer implementation schedule is required for this initial restoration increment. Should restoration take longer than anticipated, legally binding assurances must be provided to permittees that water yields will not be reduced below the minimum described in the decision tree process.

12. Page 6-29, lines 6-7 state that “...these measures do not involve additional financial commitments or resource restrictions without the consent of the Permittee...”

*Comment:* This text should be changed to read "...these measures do not involve additional land, water, or financial compensation commitments, or additional restrictions on the use of land, water, or other natural resources ~~restrictions~~ without the consent of the Permittee...". This change is consistent with the regulatory assurances provided by the "no surprises" rule.

#### Chapter 7 – Implementation Structure

13. Pages 7-3 and 7-4, Table 7-1: A significant level of decision-making authority would be granted to the Authorized Entity Group under the proposed BDCP governance framework. For many of the decisions outlined in Table 7-1, the Authorized Entity Group is identified as having a primary decision-making authority role. Additionally, for many BDCP implementation issues, it appears that the Authorized Entity Group is being granted substantial decision-making authority. Even for those decisions where the Authorized Entity Group is not identified as the party making decisions on implementation issues in Table 7-1, the dispute resolution process proposes to grant substantial deference to the Authorized Entity Group.

*Comment:* Given that the Authorized Entity Group is granted such broad decision-making deference, it would seem that a significantly larger group than is currently contemplated within the BDCP governance framework is warranted. A more inclusive governance model – providing for all permittees to be members of the Authorized Entity Group – would ensure more balanced decision-making by the body. The Final BDCP should revise membership of the Authorized Entity Group to include all BDCP permittees.

14. Page 7-10, line 39 states that "The Authorized Entity Group will consist of the Director of DWR, the Regional Director for Reclamation, and a representative of the participating state contractors and a representative of the participating federal water contractors..."

*Comment:* Similar to Comment #13 above. The four-member Authorized Entity Group is inadequate to fully represent the interests of all Authorized Entities. As stated on page 7-9, line 14, Authorized Entities includes "...those state and federal water contractors that receive take authorizations...". The relationship between the very limited membership of the Authorized Entity Group and the much larger group of SWP and CVP Authorized Entities is unclear. Because SWP and CVP Authorized Entities will have been issued permits and maintain a substantial direct financial interest in BDCP implementation, the Authorized Entity Group should include every SWP or CVP contractor that receives a take authorization. An example of this more-inclusive governance model can be found by examining the functions of the Steering Committee for the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation

Program administered by Reclamation. The Final BDCP should expand membership of the Authorized Entity Group to include all SWP and CVP Authorized Entities.

15. Page 7-12, lines 17-21 state that “The Authorized Entity Group will institute procedures with respect to public notice of and access to its meetings and its meetings with the Permit Oversight Group....All meetings will be open to the public.”

*Comment:* The Water Authority appreciates that all meetings of the Authorized Entity Group will be conducted in public. However, the BDCP is silent with respect to the requirements under California’s open meeting and records laws, the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the California Public Records Act and the Federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and the applicability of those statutes to the activities and undertakings of the Authorized Entity Group. The Final BDCP should clearly delineate the state and federal statutes relevant to the activities of the Authorized Entity Group.

16. Pages 7-13, lines 9-27 state that “The Permit Oversight Group will be composed of the state and federal fish and wildlife agencies... will be involved in certain decisions relating to the implementation of water operations, and other conservation measures, actions proposed through the adaptive management program or in response to changed circumstances, approaches to monitoring and scientific research.”

*Comment:* The BDCP document is completely silent with respect to whether or not the Permit Oversight Group must comply with state or federal public meeting and records laws. The Final BDCP should clearly delineate the state and federal statutes relevant to the activities of the Permit Oversight Group.

17. Page 7-13, line 37 states that the Permit Oversight Group will have “decision making regarding real-time operations”. This section goes on to state that the “roles ... are still under consideration and will be addressed in Chapter 3, Conservation Strategy”.

*Comment:* We could not find a detailed explanation of the Permit Oversight Group role in Chapter 3. Understanding the role of the regulatory (i.e., HCP/NCCP permits) agencies during implementation of the BDCP is critical. Most HCP/NCCP’s that the Water Authority is familiar with have the regulators as strictly advisory, without the ability to impose unilateral actions unless the species are in danger of extinction. This places sole responsibility for BDCP success on the permittees. If the regulators have unilateral decision making authority for one or more aspects of BDCP implementation, they then accept some level of responsibility for the ultimate outcome by virtue of any decisions they impose. Keeping the regulators outside the decision process, but in a close

advisory role, allows the permittees to freely implement the BDCP that they voluntarily developed. If the regulators believe the permittees are not acting in compliance with BDCP permits, the Implementing Agreement would normally contain provisions to suspend or revoke the HCP and/or NCCP permits (however, as noted above, there was no Implementing Agreement included in review documents). The Final BDCP should remove all BDCP implementation decision making authority from the Permit Oversight Group.

18. Page 7-16, line 40 through Page 7-17, line 2 states that “The Adaptive Management Team will hold public meetings... noticed and open to the public.”

*Comment:* The Water Authority appreciates that all meetings of the Adaptive Management Team will be conducted in public. However, the BDCP is silent with respect to the requirements under California’s open meeting and records laws, the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the California Public Records Act and the Federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and the applicability of those statutes to the activities and undertakings of the Adaptive Management Team. The Final BDCP should clearly delineate the state and federal statutes relevant to the activities of the Adaptive Management Team.

19. Page 7-17, line 17 states that “In the event that the Authorized Entity Group and the Permit Oversight Group are unable to resolve the issue at hand, the entity with decision-making authority... will make the final decision”.

*Comment:* Similar to Comment #17 above regarding the appropriate role of the permitting agencies. Regulatory agencies should not be in a decision making role unless they are prepared to accept responsibility for the eventual outcome of the BDCP. Once the regulatory agencies issue the HCP and NCCP authorizations (i.e., permits), their role is to verify compliance with the BDCP and Implementing Agreement. If permittees are not in compliance, the regulatory agencies can initiate permit suspension or revocation procedures (which should be detailed in the Implementing Agreement). Therefore, all decisions related to BDCP implementation should be made by the Authorized Entity Group (composed of all permittees), in consultation with the Permit Oversight Group. The Final BDCP should be revised to clarify that regulatory agencies provide guidance and advice to the Authorized Entity Group, but do not have BDCP implementation decision making authority.

20. Page 7-20, lines 21-22 state that “Stakeholder Council meetings will be open to the public.”

*Comment:* The Water Authority appreciates that all meetings of the Stakeholder Council will be conducted in public. However, the BDCP is silent with respect to the requirements under California’s open meeting and records laws, the

Federal Advisory Committee Act, the California Public Records Act and the Federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and the applicability of those statutes to the activities and undertakings of the Stakeholder Council. The Final BDCP should clearly delineate the state and federal statutes relevant to the activities of the Stakeholder Council.

21. Page 7-21, lines 6-26 state that “Any member of the council, however, will have the right to object to any proposal of the Program Manager... If the dispute is not resolved within the 60 day period, the issue will be elevated to the Authorized Entity Group... If the issue remains unresolved... for over 90 days, it will be referred for decision by the entity with the locus of responsibility...recognizing that multiple entities may have some relevant responsibility.”

*Comment:* This provision needs additional clarification and structure to ensure that the dispute resolution process does not become a de facto delay process for those opposed to BDCP implementation. Gridlock could easily occur if not only prospective, but also prior implementation actions may be challenged at any time. The Final BDCP should include provisions to ensure that multiple or repeated objections do not result in significant disruption of the program.

22. Page 7-27, lines 29-31 state that “The Program Manager, through the Implementation Office... will generally be responsible for the planning, oversight, implementation of actions set out in the conservation strategy.”

*Comment:* While charged with implementing the BDCP, there is no discussion of the appropriate legal framework within which the Implementation Office, proposed BDCP governance structure, and associated coordinating and dispute resolution mechanisms would be effectuated. Would the legal framework require legislation, a memorandum of understanding/agreement, bylaws, a joint powers authority, or some other structure? The Final BDCP should explain the legal documentation and processes necessary to allow participating entities to fund and implement the BDCP. Again, Reclamation’s Lower Colorado River MSCP provides an example of a legal framework that is working to successfully implement a complex multiple species conservation plan.

#### Chapter 8 – Implementation Costs and Funding Sources

23. Page 8-1, lines 36-39 state that “Consistent with the ‘beneficiary pays’ principle and in recognition of public benefits associated with environmental restoration of this important region, it is assumed that a state and federal investment will be available and necessary to implement the BDCP, as described in Section 8.3, *Funding Sources.*”

*Comment:* BDCP was conceived as a “beneficiary pays” project. However, the BDCP does not include a detailed financial plan. Instead, the public draft relies on the projected benefits afforded to the exporters to gauge funding support for the conveyance facilities (i.e., CM1). Until a detailed financial plan is finalized and cost allocation formula agreed upon by participants, there will continue to be questions and concerns regarding what “beneficiary pays” means in terms of precise cost obligations. Is “beneficiary pays” based on the value the water provides to a specific contractor? Does “beneficiary pays” mean every contractor pays the same unit cost for water received? As envisioned by the BDCP, the water quantity available for export will vary depending on hydrology; how would the benefits be calculated and unit costs be derived for each “beneficiary” under constantly changing hydrological conditions? Many water suppliers in Southern California are seeking to reduce their demand for imported water from the Delta. What happens if contractors’ needs for the water decrease in the future? How would the costs be allocated then? More importantly, how would costs be allocated pursuant to state and federal laws – including, without limitation, the cost-of-service requirements of California Constitution Article XIII A and C (Proposition 26)? Both the HCP and NCCP regulations require the BDCP to demonstrate that it has funding assurances from those expected to pay - including the state and federal governments – rather than relying on assumptions. The Final BDCP should address these issues to ensure the BDCP’s ability to be funded.

24. Page 8-2, lines 22-24 state that the chapter is not a financing plan...“nor does it establish the final allocation of cost or repayment responsibility; rather financing plans will be prepared separately by various funding agencies and through future discussions between state and federal agencies.”

*Comment:* The final BDCP must make fiscal sense and also be both affordable and financeable. Potential participants in the BDCP must have sufficient detailed information to evaluate the cost-benefit (or feasibility) of participating in the project on the individual participant level. Lack of disclosure on how costs will be shared by beneficiaries does not allow existing water contractors to make an informed decision to invest in the BDCP. This analysis should be included in the Final BDCP.

25. Page 8-66, Footnote “a” states that “...funding estimates from state and federal agencies do not represent commitments and are subject to grant awards, annual appropriations from Congress, and passage of water bonds by the voters of California.”

*Comment:* The reliance on the funding history of yet to be appropriated federal sources and future water bonds makes it unclear if the project will receive an adequate public share of the funding. To match the comprehensiveness of

BDCP as a planning process, it is important to identify how the public share of the funding source may be composed and from whom the funds may be derived. The Final BDCP should provide greater detail and explain how funding assurances required by HCP/NCCP permits will be achieved given the uncertain nature of future state and federal funds.

26. Page 8-73, lines 5-7 state that “State and federal water contractors that are participating in the development of the BDCP have committed to fund construction, operation, and construction-related costs for implementation of *CM1 Water Facilities and Operation*, the new water conveyance facilities.”

*Comment:* Contrary to this statement, there is nothing in the EIR/EIS or BDCP documents that confirms that any state or federal water contractor has made a commitment to fund the project. The Water Authority is not aware of any such commitments. In fact, the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California – the largest State Water Project contractor, with an approximate 46-percent share of the existing State Water Project – has never voted to fund construction of any portion of the proposed project (CM1). Necessary contractual agreements for individual SWP and CVP contractors to fund CM1 are unclear and the process for revising SWP and CVP cost allocations if individual contractors decline to participate, or drop out later, is not defined. To ensure the BDCP is fully funded, any BDCP financing plan must include enforceable agreements to pay for the project, not only from state and federal water contractors directly, but also from the member agencies or units that provide their revenues. It is unclear whether the SWP contractors can rely on the taxing authority afforded to them under the existing SWP project to pay for the BDCP. The projected costs are too high to have confidence that the contractors’ water sales are adequate to cover the BDCP’s costs now or in the future. Specific areas requiring more detail in the Final BDCP include:

- Contractors that are wholesale water agencies should demonstrate that their customers will pay for the project, either through take-or-pay contracts or other enforceable, long-term financial commitments to pay the fixed costs of the project commensurate with the term of the contractors’ BDCP obligation;
- Analysis is needed on the impacts of “step-up” provisions – pledges that require other BDCP participants to assume the debt obligations of defaulting participants;
- Legal analysis should be undertaken to examine the feasibility and appropriateness of relying upon property taxes as additional back-up security for contractors’ BDCP debt; and
- Legal and financial analyses should be undertaken to examine the financial risks to the state of California if bonds issued to fund construction of the project (CM1) are backed by the full faith and credit of the state.

27. Page 8-84, lines 18-21 state that "...the BDCP is expected to secure a large portion of the funds allocated to Delta sustainability, as well as smaller portions of funds allocated to conservation and watershed protection. The water bond will support the public benefits of Plan implementation, particularly natural community restoration and other stressors conservation measures."

*Comment:* Firm commitments to ensure state and federal funding for CM 2-22 are lacking. The BDCP expects almost 90 percent of the costs for ecosystem restoration and program administration to be shared by state and federal funding. Most state funding is anticipated to be provided by future water bonds, including one or more bonds scheduled for the November 2014 ballot. A majority of federal funding is expected to be provided by congressional appropriation, which has uncertain support. The uncertainty that voters and Congress would approve the water bonds and federal appropriation, respectively, leads to the question as to whether, and how much, the contractors will be expected to help pay for the costs to obtain the envisioned water supply benefits. If the public funding envisioned does not materialize, will the contractors be expected to fund these costs? If funding is unavailable for restoration, would CM1 operations be changed from those presented in the BDCP? The Final BDCP needs to include a discussion of alternate funding sources, as well as potential impact on available exports, should bonds for CM 2-22 not be approved by the voters.

28. Page 8-80, lines 16-17 state that "Contractors more distant from the Delta provide more funding than contractors close to the Delta because of the capital cost of the California Aqueduct and increased pumping and O&M costs."

*Comment:* While this statement may be true for existing SWP contractors, it is unclear whether this same logic is being applied to BDCP funding. Since all Delta improvements will occur upstream of the Banks Pumping Plant at Clifton Court Forebay and will not affect existing south-of-Delta facilities or operations, distance from the Delta has no bearing on BDCP implementation cost. The Final BDCP should clarify that funding obligations for water contractors south of Banks Pumping Plant will not contain any differential based on distance from the Delta.

29. Page 8-99, lines 17-21 state that "...potential federal funding sources are divided into four categories. First, existing federal appropriations relevant to BDCP are expected to continue in amounts and for durations described below. Second, new federal appropriations would be needed to support BDCP. Third, several federal grant programs are expected to provide funding to support BDCP actions. Finally, other federal funding sources are described."

*Comment:* See above comment #27.

30. Page 8-122, lines 13-15 state that "...the Authorized Entities will not be required to provide land, water, or monetary resources beyond their commitments in this Plan in the event of a shortfall in state or federal funding."

*Comment:* Provisions to ensure adequate funding by participants required for HCP/NCCP approval are lacking. It is unclear how CM 1 would be operated as a result of a shortfall in public funding. What operational scenarios and how much export water would be made available absent public funding (and associated reduction in restoration) should be disclosed in the Final BDCP and before HCP/NCCP permits are issued.

Appendix 9A – Economic Benefits of the BDCP and Take Alternatives

31. Page 9.A-7, line 36 states that "Seawater desalination is another supply that is relied on during drought periods."

*Comment:* The Water Authority concurs with the acknowledgement that seawater desalination can be an important and reliable water supply during both normal and drought periods, as well as with the incorporation of the Carlsbad Desalination Project in the analysis.

32. Page 9.A-12, lines 9-13 and Footnote 5 state that "...models incorporate projections... provided by... San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG)"

*Comment:* The SANDAG Series 12 growth forecasts used in the analysis are outdated and do not account for updated Census data and the 2007 recession. Utilizing old growth forecast information likely results in a higher water demand forecast in the initial years. Analysis in the Final BDCP should incorporate the updated SANDAG forecast released last year (Series 13). This forecast incorporates data from the 2010 Census and captures the effects of the 2007 recession.

33. Page 9.A-14, Footnote 6 states that "...SANDAG employment projections were developed before the 2007 recession..."

*Comment:* The employment projections use an outdated SANDAG growth forecast (Series 12), which doesn't take into account the updated Census data and 2007 recession. Utilizing old growth forecast information likely results in a higher employment (and water demand) forecast in the initial years. Analysis in the Final BDCP should incorporate the updated SANDAG forecast released last year (Series 13). This forecast incorporates data from the 2010 Census and captures the effects of the 2007 recession.

34. Page 9.A-28, lines 36-40 state that "...historical consumption and rate data...were collected directly from retailers with the exception of... San Diego County Water Authority, for which data was acquired from annual surveys conducted by the wholesale member agencies."

*Comment:* The Water Authority has not prepared an annual survey of water rates since 2004. The Final BDCP should clarify how the Water Authority's service area retail rate information was derived, and include the date and title of any reference document in the literature cited section.

35. Page 9.A-33, lines 8-14 state that "The cost of the water supply increase resulting from the BDCP Proposed Action is also well below the cost of other alternative supply alternatives. ...the implicit water supply cost... ranges from \$238 to \$321 per acre foot<sup>9</sup>."

*Comment:* Although we understand that the range of unit costs represents the cost of the incremental yield for the BDCP Proposed Action High-Outflow and Low-Outflow Scenarios relative to the Existing Conveyance High-Outflow and Low-Outflow Scenarios, it is unclear how the \$238/AF to \$321/AF unit costs were derived or what the exact meaning of "implicit water supply cost" is. We recognize Appendix 9A is an economic analysis to quantify BDCP benefits on an average yield basis. However, the reliance on incremental yield in calculating those economic benefits should be placed into the context of what contractor allocations under Table A will look like post-BDCP implementation. Actual unit costs will vary widely given the expected swings in yield and the fixed cost nature of the contracts. It is also unclear why unit costs are being included in the water supply alternatives discussion because, (as noted in Footnote 9) the costs cannot be used to directly compare other supply alternatives. If the intent of the included alternatives analyses is to compare the implicit water supply cost of the BDCP Proposed Alternative to local supplies, the Water Authority suggests that a unit cost can be developed that is comparable to the local supply cost being cited. Such a unit cost can be calculated based on the following:

$$\text{Unit Cost} = \frac{\text{Annual amortized capital cost for CM1}}{\text{Expected yield expressed in the same year dollars as the local supply cost}} + \text{Annual operating cost}$$

This approach would allow the BDCP to more adequately benchmark its cost to local supply costs, and is more consistent with the method water suppliers (like the Water Authority) use to compare alternative supplies. The Final BDCP should provide more detailed information on the derivation of the unit costs, a definition of implicit water supply costs, and describe why they are being included in this section, especially if the cited unit costs cannot be used to

compare the supply alternatives. To support the analytical conclusions, the Final BDCP should provide a unit cost that can be used to compare supply alternatives.

36. Page 9.A-36, lines 7-11 state that "...costs of... short-term conservation are at the low end of... water supply alternative costs. Because short-term conservation is a feasible option, and because the costs of alternatives cannot be known with precision for any individual agency, for planning purposes it is appropriate to measure BDCP benefits using mandatory short-term conservation costs."

*Comment:* It is unclear why other alternative water supply costs are discussed in this section when short-term conservation is assumed as the appropriate measure of BDCP benefits. The Final BDCP should clarify the purpose of Section 9.A.2.4.4 and how the alternative water supply volumes and costs are utilized in the economic benefits analysis.

37. Page 9.A-36, lines 14-15 state that "... the analysis of urban water supply benefits... is based on an assumed build-out of alternative water supplies."

*Comment:* It is unclear how build-out of alternative water supplies is utilized in the BDCP economic benefits analysis. The Final BDCP should clarify how the costs for alternative water supply build-out and mandatory conservation were used in the economic benefits analysis, and the distinction between the two uses.

38. Page 9.A-49, lines 14-17 state that "The BDCP Proposed Action...assumed 3.8 MAF of water supplies under post-earthquake conditions."

*Comment:* There is no backup information to support the assumptions on water supply availability under post-earthquake conditions. The Final BDCP should provide information to support the supply yields assumed to be available from existing conveyance, BDCP Proposed Action, and other take alternatives under post-earthquake conditions.

### **Draft Conceptual Engineering Report**

The Conceptual Engineering Report (CER) does not lend itself to the "page and line" comment format as in the above documents. Therefore, the following comments have been grouped in general topical areas. Because these topics are not confined to a single location and are scattered throughout the report, any comment should be considered applicable to every appearance of that topic in the report.

### **Schedule**

39. The project's schedules included as part of the CER's Executive Summary and Appendix C are not the same.

*Comment:* These schedules need to be reconciled and the text clarified to discuss any assumptions used in the schedule.

40. The Appendix C schedule contains a number of fixed, or constrained, task completion dates.

*Comment:* The CER does not include the schedule logic to determine if these constrained dates are achievable or reasonable. At the preliminary engineering stage of a project, completion dates should not be constrained so it can be determined if the schedule is reasonable. All constraints should be removed from the task completion dates and the schedule logic should be provided to determine whether that logic, and therefore the schedule, is appropriate and reasonable.

41. Appendix C of the CER includes an item for property acquisition necessary to complete the project.

*Comment:* Appendix C provides no detail on how the BDCP team intends to acquire land rights from the hundreds of impacted property owners along the route of the tunnels, at the forebays, the intake facilities, and impacted by the installation or relocation of utilities and roads necessary for the project. A comprehensive property acquisition plan should be included to identify the nature of property rights to be acquired, the schedule for doing so, and the staff or consultant resources necessary to complete this task.

#### Project Risks

42. The BDCP infrastructure is subject to a considerable number of risks that could negatively impact the project's cost and schedule.

*Comment:* While mostly identified in the CER, these risks must be adequately addressed during the design and construction of the project. The most significant of these risks include:

- Lack of geotechnical information. The CER repeatedly states that additional geotechnical information is needed to adequately design the project's tunnels, intake pumping facilities, levees, tunnel muck disposal sites and forebays.
- Tunnel construction methodology. The tunnel methodology is highly dependent on the geologic conditions along the tunnel routes but must address the likelihood of variable soil conditions.
- Available Resources. The project as proposed and ancillary efforts such as utility relocation will require numerous specialized engineers, geologists, right of way agents, tunnel boring machines, tunnel boring machine operators, specialized underground contractors, lawyers, court resources (in support of right of way acquisition efforts) and various technical experts. It

is unclear if these resources can be obtained in a timely manner to meet the project's schedule.

- Power requirements. The CER is undecided on how the power will be provided to the project both during construction and during operations and by how many electrical companies. The CER indicates power may be provided to each site by multiple electrical companies. The cost and time associated with a second power source to each project location has not been addressed.
- Access and utility conflicts. The project will require the relocation of roads and utilities. It is uncertain whether those conflicts will be addressed by the BDCP or the utility or public agency that owns the utility. The extent of relocations, their cost and how long it will take to resolve utility and road conflicts are not thoroughly defined in the CER.
- Property rights acquisition. See item under Schedule above. Property acquisition via the eminent domain process allows the property owner to challenge the project proponent's right to take their property via eminent domain. Linear projects, such as the BDCP infrastructure, are particularly vulnerable to costly reroutes and delays if a right to take challenge is upheld by the courts. The value of the rights to be acquired can also vary greatly. This uncertainty should be thoroughly detailed in the CER.
- Recent Court rulings. On March 13, 2014 the Third Appellate District Court of Appeal ruled the BDCP's efforts to obtain additional geotechnical and environmental information resulted in a permanent property acquisition (take) from impacted property owners. This contradicts long-standing law that allows public agencies access to private property for study purposes and pay the owner if there are any damages. This ruling, if not overturned, will result in unknown and potentially significant delays to the project.

A comprehensive Risk Registry that identifies risks that could adversely impact the project's schedule, and cost and how those risks will be mitigated during future design or construction, should be included in the final CER and updated on a regular basis as the design and construction progresses.

#### Estimate Accuracy and Project Contingency

43. The CER (Chapter 8) notes the accuracy of the construction estimate ranges from is +50% to -25%; however, the project cost estimate includes only a 36% contingency.

*Comment:* The CER is unclear on the rationale used to determine the cited accuracy range or the selection of the specific cost estimate contingency. Subsequent communication (February 26, 2014 letter from Mr. Charles R. Gardner Jr., CEO Hallmark Group) noted the construction estimate accuracy had been improved to +30% to -20% and therefore the contingency of 36% was more than adequate. However, no information on how the "more accurate" cost

estimate was prepared has been provided since the October 2013 release of the CER. The final CER should disclose the methodology, including an analysis of project risks, used to derive a project contingency of 36%. It should also disclose and explain the information that allowed a more accurate cost estimate to be prepared. Absent this information the Water Authority believes the project contingency should be set at 50% based upon the upper range of the cost estimate's accuracy.

The Water Authority appreciates the opportunity to review the proposed project and provide comments on the Draft EIR/EIS and associated documents. As noted above, the Water Authority requires additional information to determine if the BDCP Proposed Action as described and analyzed in the Draft EIR/EIS is a cost-effective long-term solution to Delta water supply and ecosystem conflicts.

Please retain the Water Authority on your mailing list to receive future notifications or documents regarding this project. If you have questions or wish to discuss any of the above concerns in greater detail, please contact Larry Purcell, Water Resources Manager at (858) 522-6752, or by email at [lpurcell@sdewa.org](mailto:lpurcell@sdewa.org).

Sincerely,



Maureen A. Stapleton  
General Manager

Attachments: (1) Meral ltr of 08/28/12  
(2) Meral ltr of 07/30/13  
(3) Laird ltr of 10/07/13



## San Diego County Water Authority

4677 Overland Avenue • San Diego, California 92123-1233  
(858) 522-6600 FAX (858) 522-6568 [www.sdcwa.org](http://www.sdcwa.org)

August 28, 2012

### MEMBER AGENCIES

San Diego  
County of San Diego

San Diego County

San Diego County

San Diego County

San Diego County

San Diego County

San Diego County

San Diego County

San Diego County

San Diego County

San Diego County

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San Diego County

San Diego County

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San Diego County

### OTHER REPRESENTATIVE

San Diego County

Dr. Gerald Meral  
Deputy Secretary  
California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Jerry:

Thank you for visiting with us on Wednesday. We enjoyed our discussion, and appreciate the information you shared on the progress of the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan. We very much appreciate the efforts by you, Secretary Laird, Governor Brown, Secretary Salazar and all of the state and federal agencies in bringing the BDCP to this point.

We promised to send you the Water Authority's comments on BDCP Chapter 8. We understand that work is under way to produce a new draft of Chapter 8. It is our hope that the issues outlined below will be considered and addressed.

### Introduction

The San Diego County Water Authority is a wholesale water agency providing a safe and reliable water supply to 24 public agencies in San Diego County, supporting our region's \$186 billion economy and the quality of life of 3.1 million Californians. Highly dependent on imported water supplies, the Water Authority has historically and consistently been a strong advocate for the Delta and for the co-equal goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California, while protecting, restoring and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. The Water Authority's board of directors reaffirmed this longstanding support at its February 2012 board meeting. The board also adopted an updated set of policy principles relating to the Bay-Delta outlining the critical issues that must be resolved in the BDCP process; a copy of these Policy Principles is enclosed.

Chief among the Water Authority's concerns is the need to define the various components of the financing plan for the BDCP and the recently announced decision-tree concept in a manner that allows potential participants to evaluate the cost-benefit (or feasibility) of participating in the project. We believe the financing plan must include enforceable agreements to pay for the project, not only from state water contractors directly, but from the member agencies or units

that provide their revenues. The costs are simply too great to rely on the hope that there will be enough water purchasers over the long-term to pay the project's costs.

As the largest customer of the largest state water contractor – the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) – the Water Authority's ratepayers have a great deal at stake in the BDCP process and its financing plan. The Water Authority must be able to assess not only that the project will provide sufficient benefits to be affordable by our ratepayers, but also that they are not at risk of paying BDCP costs associated with the water supplies of other MWD member agencies or state contractors. The Water Authority is already in litigation with MWD over how it allocates its current State Water Project costs.

The Water Authority is concerned that all of the progress that has been made in bringing the BDCP to this point will be stymied, and that the BDCP will fail if participants are not able to evaluate the cost-benefit of the project or reasonably limit the risk their ratepayers are being asked to assume. It is in this light that we offer the following brief comments on the administrative draft of Chapter 8 – *Implementation Costs and Funding Sources*.

#### **Comments**

As the largest state water contractor, MWD is the foundation for financing the project. And yet, MWD itself has been struggling over the past several years to pay its current fixed costs – let alone a substantially larger cost associated with the BDCP. The reason is simple: more than 80 percent of MWD's costs are fixed while less than 20 percent of its revenues are paid from fixed charges. More than 80 percent of MWD's revenues come from water sales. Yet, MWD's member agencies are not required to purchase *any* water from MWD. With its member agencies unwilling to sign take-or-pay contracts or make any other firm financial commitments to MWD to cover its fixed obligations, the agency remains heavily dependent on revenues from variable water sales. MWD's water sales have declined approximately 30 percent since 2008, with its firm sales declining to less than 1.3 million acre-feet in fiscal year 2012. MWD's member agencies – including the Water Authority – have also experienced significant reductions in sales. A direct consequence of these declining sales is sharply higher imported water rates that have made additional local water supply investments economically competitive. As a consequence, MWD's member agencies – and their sub-agencies – are doing what they have been asked to do over the past 20 years: reducing reliance on water supplies imported from the Delta.

We are concerned that the BDCP will become the kind of "big ticket project" that MWD board members vocally and enthusiastically support – at the same time their agencies are unwilling to make enforceable commitments to pay for the project.

A final note on the subject of risk: because the project is anticipated to be financed through project revenues, we are informed that bond underwriters are expected to require a "step up" provision by which each BDCP participant in BDCP-related bonds pledges to assume the obligations of defaulting participants.<sup>1</sup> The current draft of Chapter 8 is silent on this issue, yet it is conceivable that some of the BDCP participants may default, which would cause remaining participants, including MWD, to assume a greater portion of the debt. It is important that Chapter 8 analyze the possible effects of the "step up" provisions on MWD and the other participants in the BDCP.

Some have suggested that property taxes may provide the ultimate security for BDCP payment obligations of individual contractors. Putting aside the question whether property taxes levied under the authorization of the Burns-Porter Act may be used to pay for new projects contemplated by the BDCP, it is important to remember that MWD's taxing authority is further limited by the provisions of the MWD Act.<sup>2</sup> Although the Act contains override ability in the event of a fiscal crisis as determined by the MWD board (one year at a time<sup>3</sup>), it effectively limits MWD's ability to levy taxes to pay its SWP obligations. It is also unclear whether changes to this limit would require voter approval. Thus, a careful legal analysis of MWD taxing authority should be included in the BDCP due diligence process if taxes are contemplated as additional back-up security for project debt.

To effectively evaluate the finances available for the BDCP, the drafters of Chapter 8 need to conduct comprehensive due diligence on all of the facts and

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<sup>1</sup> Under Section 50(h) of MWD's current State Water Project contract, non-defaulting contractors can be assessed to cover payments not made by defaulting contractors, up to 25 percent of the payment not made. Under Section 49(l) of its East Branch Extension of the State Water Project contract, MWD is obligated to cover a default by any and all other participants.

<sup>2</sup> Section 124.5 of the Metropolitan Water District Act limits MWD's property tax levy to "the composite amount required to pay (1) the principal and interest on general obligation bonded indebtedness of the district and (2) that portion of the district's payment obligation under [the SWP contract] which is reasonably allocable, as determined by the district, to the repayment by the state of principal and interest on [SWP bonds] as of [January 1, 1985] and used to finance construction of facilities for the benefit of the district."

<sup>3</sup> In such an event, the State of California would be relying upon an annual vote of MWD's Board of Directors in which it "...finds that a tax in excess of these restrictions is essential to the fiscal integrity of the district...."

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circumstances described in this letter. Without such due diligence, the BDCP faces a potential cascading collapse of funding. At a minimum, state water contractors that are wholesale water agencies must demonstrate that their customers – the member agencies or units that buy their water and provide their revenues – have take-or-pay contracts or other enforceable commitments to pay the fixed costs of the project commensurate with the term of the BDCP obligation. The Water Authority continues to stand ready to make such a commitment to MWD that provides benefits commensurate with its payments.

Ultimately, the full faith and credit of the State of California will back up the bonds issued to build the conveyance project. Failure to secure enforceable financial commitments from the member agencies or units of water wholesale contractors could place all of California at significant risk of having tens of billions of dollars of new outstanding debt without sufficient water contractor payments to cover the debt service. This is why all California taxpayers have a stake in ensuring that there is a solid foundation and financing plan for the BDCP going forward.

Thank you again for providing the opportunity to comment on the administrative draft of Chapter 8 of the BDCP. We are committed to working with you and all parties to address and resolve these issues.

Sincerely,



Maureen A. Stapleton  
General Manager

Enclosure: Water Authority Bay-Delta Policy Principles

BDCP1931



## San Diego County Water Authority

4677 Overland Avenue • San Diego, California 92123-1233  
(858) 522-6600 FAX (858) 522-6568 www.sdcwa.org

July 30, 2013

Dr. Gerald Meral  
Deputy Secretary  
California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Jerry:

Thank you for the efforts that you, your state and federal agency colleagues, and the Administration have made to bring the BDCP to the point where it stands today. We appreciate the opportunity that the release of an administrative draft of the BDCP affords us to provide comments and questions that should be addressed in the next draft. This letter is a follow-up to the Water Authority's previous correspondence on BDCP Chapter 8, and conversations we have had with you over the past year.

Like many other stakeholders, the San Diego County Water Authority anticipated the May 29 release of the final chapters of the administrative draft of the BDCP document and believed, based upon earlier representations, it would address the questions and concerns the Water Authority has raised over the past several years over project financing. In particular, we were anxious to review the new draft of Chapter 8 in light of the correspondence we sent you 11 months ago (attached), in which we raised a series of BDCP financing issues and concerns. Our subsequent conversations led us to believe these concerns would be addressed in the most current iteration of Chapter 8. Instead, and disappointingly, Chapter 8 begins with this jarring admission:

*"Details of the financing... are still being determined through on-going discussion between the state and federal governments and between the government, the state and federal water contractors and other interests."*

After reviewing the newly-revised Chapter 8 of the BDCP administrative draft, seven years into the BDCP planning process, and nearly a year after commenting on the prior draft, the most critical financing issues confronting the BDCP have yet to be addressed.

As we shared with you previously, potential participants in the BDCP must have sufficiently detailed information to evaluate the cost-benefit (or feasibility) of participating in the project. We recently heard David Sunding report to the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's (MWD) Board of Directors that a cost-benefit analysis has been produced for all urban and agricultural water contractors, and that it includes an urban cost-benefit analysis for all MWD member agencies. Would you please send a copy of the complete report to me in advance of Dr. Sunding's Sept. 12 appearance before our Board's Imported Water Committee?

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As we have consistently stated, the Water Authority believes that any BDCP financing plan must include enforceable agreements to pay for the project, not only from state water contractors directly, but also from the member agencies or units that provide their revenues. The costs are far too high to simply rely on the hope that the contractors' water sales will be adequate over the long-term to pay the project's costs.

As the largest customer of the largest state water contractor – MWD – the Water Authority's member agency ratepayers have a great deal at stake in the BDCP process and its financing plan, its risks and contingencies. The Water Authority must be able to assess that the preferred alternative advocated by the BDCP program will provide sufficient benefits to be affordable for our member agency ratepayers. We also must ensure that our ratepayers are not at risk of paying BDCP costs associated with the water supplies of other MWD member agencies or other state or federal water contractors. The Water Authority is already in litigation with MWD over how it allocates its *current* State Water Project costs.

The Water Authority is concerned that future progress of the BDCP and efforts to resolve seemingly intractable conflicts in the Delta will falter if those expected to be participants in the BDCP are not able to evaluate the cost-benefit of the various alternatives or reasonably limit the risk that their ratepayers will be expected to assume. In this context, we renew our request that our comments and concerns raised in our August 28, 2012 correspondence regarding Chapter 8 of the BDCP administrative draft – *Implementation Costs and Funding Sources* – be addressed in the next draft.

#### **Comments**

In our August 28, 2012 correspondence, we identified three specific issue areas as lacking necessary discussion within Chapter 8:

- State water contractors that are wholesale water agencies should demonstrate that their customers – the member agencies or units that purchase their water and provide their revenue – have take-or-pay contracts or other enforceable, long-term commitments to pay the fixed costs of the project commensurate with the term of the BDCP obligation.
- It is important to analyze the possible effects of “step up” provisions – those bond pledges that may require other BDCP participants to assume the obligations of defaulting participants – on MWD and other participants in the BDCP.
- A careful legal analysis should be undertaken of MWD taxing authority within the BDCP due diligence process, to examine the feasibility and appropriateness of relying upon property taxes as additional back-up security for project debt.

#### **Take-Or-Pay Contracts/Enforceable Commitments**

As we have previously pointed out in discussions with you, MWD – which, as the largest state water contracting agency, is the foundation for financing the BDCP project – has been struggling over the past several years to pay its current fixed costs, let alone a substantially larger new cost associated with the BDCP. More than 80 percent of MWD's costs are fixed – however, less than 20 percent of MWD's revenues are paid from fixed charges. Conversely, more than 80 percent of MWD's revenues are from water sales – a variable revenue source – and those sales have

declined by 30 percent since 2007. Furthermore, MWD's member agencies are not required to purchase *any* water from MWD. The variability of water sales – and thus uncertain future water sales revenues – coupled with Southern California water agencies' current and future planned actions to implement the State's policy to reduce reliance on water supplies imported from the Delta, creates significant uncertainty regarding long-term financing of BDCP obligations. This should be a major concern for the State of California, whose full faith and credit will be expected to back up the financing of the project. And yet, Chapter 8 makes no mention of this material, foundational risk to BDCP financing.

The Water Authority believes that, at a minimum, state water contractors that are wholesale water agencies must demonstrate that their customers have take-or-pay contracts or other enforceable long-term commitments to pay the fixed costs of the BDCP project corresponding to the term of the BDCP obligation. The Water Authority continues to be prepared to make such a commitment to MWD as long as the Water Authority gets the water supplies in return for its payments. We also believe that the willingness to make a financial commitment to a Delta solution will largely determine the demand for Delta water supply, and therefore help inform the best sizing for the conveyance facility. It would not be in the state's best interest to construct a facility only to have it stranded because no one is willing to pay for it, or hoped-for water sales necessary to pay for it do not materialize.

#### "Step-Up" Provisions

Existing State Water Project contracts contain provisions under which non-defaulting contractors can be assessed to cover payments not made by defaulting contractors, up to 25 percent of the defaulting contractors' obligations. Additionally, the East Branch Extension of MWD's State Water Project contract has a provision obligating MWD to cover default by any and all other participants. These State Water Project contract stipulations are known as "step-up" provisions.

We are informed that bond underwriters for the BDCP project are expected to require a "step-up" provision by which each BDCP participant in BDCP-related bonds pledges to assume the obligations of defaulting participants. In fact, the newly-released Chapter 8, at Section 8.10.1.1.1 (page 8-81) provides that:

*"Existing water contracts would need to be amended to include the new costs of the BDCP assigned to the state water contractors and the repayment schedule."*

Since "step-up" provisions are already embodied within, and apply to, MWD's State Water Project contract, it would appear that such provisions would apply to the "new costs of the BDCP assigned to the state water contractors." Given those "step-up" provision obligations, we renew our request that Chapter 8 fully analyze the possible financial and economic effects of the "step-up" provisions on MWD and the other participants in the BDCP.

#### Property Taxes

Some have suggested that property taxes may be contemplated as back-up security for BDCP payment obligations of individual state water contractors. There are very clear and significant limitations in MWD's existing taxing authority under the provisions of the MWD Act:

- The Act limits MWD's ability to levy taxes to pay its State Water Project obligations.

BDCP 1931

MWD is limited to levying taxes for *"the composite amount required to pay (1) the principal and interest on general obligation bonded indebtedness of the district and (2) that portion of the district's payment obligation under [the SWP contract] which is reasonably allocable, as determined by the district, to the repayment by the state of principal and interest on [SWP bonds] as of [January 1, 1985] and used to finance construction of facilities for the benefit of the district."*

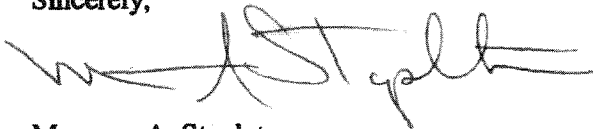
- Although the Act contains override ability in the event of a fiscal crisis, as determined by the MWD board, the override is limited to only one year at a time. In such an event, the State of California and bondholders would be relying upon an annual vote of MWD's Board of Directors in which it *"...finds that a tax in excess of these restrictions is essential to the fiscal integrity of the district...."*
- It is unclear whether changes to the limitations provided under the MWD Act would require voter approval and/or new legislation. Chapter 8 should address and answer these questions.

Given these limitations and uncertainties, it is difficult to consider MWD's existing taxing authority as a meaningful back-up security for BDCP payment obligations. It is also highly questionable whether the financing of BDCP can be – or should be – backed by taxing authority that was authorized by voters decades ago, when the program was much different than is being discussed today. A careful legal analysis of MWD taxing authority should be included in the BDCP due diligence process if taxes are going to be relied upon as additional back-up security for BDCP project debt. The newly-released version of Chapter 8 is silent on this issue.

Based on the assurances that you previously provided to the Water Authority, we expected that the full consideration and analysis of the issues we have raised would be integrated in to the Chapter 8 analysis and conclusions. And yet, the current version of Chapter 8 of the BDCP administrative draft does not comprehensively or adequately conduct due diligence on all of the facts and circumstances described in this letter and our previous correspondence. We remain concerned that a potential cascading collapse of funding could occur if the proper due diligence is not undertaken in a timely manner.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the newly-released Chapter 8 of the BDCP administrative draft. We remain committed to working with you and all parties to evaluate, address, and resolve these critical financing issues.

Sincerely,



Maureen A. Stapleton  
General Manager

Attachment: August 28, 2012 letter



BDCP1931

## San Diego County Water Authority

4677 Overland Avenue • San Diego, California 92123-1233  
(858) 522-6600 FAX (858) 522-6568 [www.sdcwa.org](http://www.sdcwa.org)

October 7, 2013

Secretary John Laird  
California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

### MEMBER AGENCIES

Carlsbad  
Municipal Water District

City of Del Mar

City of Escondido

City of National City

City of Oceanside

City of Poway

City of San Diego

Fallbrook  
Public Utility District

Helix Water District

Lakeside Water District

Olivewood  
Municipal Water District

Olney Water District

Padre Dam  
Municipal Water District

Camp Pendleton  
Marine Corps Base

Rainbow  
Municipal Water District

Ramona  
Municipal Water District

Rincon del Diabolo  
Municipal Water District

San Dieguito Water District

Santa Fe Irrigation District

South Bay Irrigation District

Vallecitos Water District

Valley Center  
Municipal Water District

Vista Irrigation District

Yuma  
Municipal Water District

OTHER  
REPRESENTATIVE

County of San Diego

Dear Secretary Laird:

On behalf of the San Diego County Water Authority (Water Authority), thank you for your September 11, 2013 letter to Chair Wornham and me responding to a January 2013 multi-agency letter requesting analysis of the Natural Resources Defense Council's portfolio approach to statewide water management and the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP).

We look forward to working with you to help develop a BDCP project that achieves the co-equal goals and is affordable. As the largest member agency of the largest State Water Contractor, the Metropolitan Water District, the Water Authority and its ratepayers are being counted upon to pay the second-largest share of BDCP costs.<sup>1</sup> Yet, we have been relegated to the status of an outside observer who may have no financial stake in the BDCP. Accordingly, we request the opportunity to become more directly engaged in the BDCP cost allocation discussions and negotiations process – and be part of the solution. The stakes are sufficiently high for the San Diego region to be afforded the opportunity to be at the cost allocation negotiating table.

As you know, the Water Authority has not endorsed any alternative that has been considered by the BDCP program or advanced by others, including the Natural Resources Defense Council's Portfolio Alternative and the Delta Vision Foundation's BDCP-Plus. However, we firmly believe that a thorough and comprehensive analysis of Delta fix alternatives is critical to help inform the ultimate selection of an implementable plan for achieving the co-equal goals.

The Water Authority is committed to helping find a Delta solution, and to that end, is continuing its multi-year effort to inform our Board of Directors and civic and business leaders in our region on a variety of issues associated with the Delta. In addition, over the past several months, the Water Authority Board and staff have been engaged in an intensive, comprehensive review of BDCP-related alternatives to assess how various options may improve the San Diego region's water supply reliability along with risks associated with each. This review process is ongoing, and is scheduled to continue into 2014. We were disappointed to learn from Natural Resources Agency Deputy Secretary Jerry Meral at our September 12 Board workshop that determinations regarding the cost allocation among contractors will not be concluded when the BDCP and its environmental documents are released for public review next month. Although we plan to

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<sup>1</sup> Among MWD's member agencies, and second only to the Kern County Water Agency.

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submit a formal comment letter during the BDCP environmental review process, the allocation of BDCP costs and the resultant rate impacts on San Diegans will remain a central element in our Board's consideration of which option to support.

While we had hoped that your Agency's evaluation of the Portfolio Alternative would be helpful to the Water Authority's ongoing review and analysis, some of the information contained in your September 11 letter raises more questions than it answers.

- The letter states that a single-tunnel, 3,000 cfs conveyance facility (which is proposed in the Portfolio Alternative) would cost \$6 billion less than the BDCP preferred alternative (9,000 cfs twin tunnels) - \$8.5 billion compared to \$14.5 billion. However, on September 16, a corrected version of the evaluation was posted on the BDCP website, which indicates that the 3,000 cfs single-tunnel conveyance facility would only cost \$3 billion less than the BDCP preferred alternative. Further, none of these numbers match Dr. David Sunding's economic benefit analysis, which he shared with us at our September 12 Board of Directors workshop, which identified the cost at \$10 billion.

Many entities that are undertaking review and analysis of the Delta fix options, like the Water Authority, would benefit from reliable cost estimates for the conveyance features of the Portfolio Alternative. The lack of clarity in the cost estimate has made it challenging to have a meaningful cost comparison of the various conveyance feature sizes. Could you please provide an apples-to-apples cost comparison of the 3,000 (single tunnel), 6,000 and 9,000 cfs conveyance project sizes?

- In terms of the benefit cost ratio of alternatives, your evaluation indicates that *"the 3,000-cfs tunnel has a negative benefit cost ratio, largely because the cost of the 3,000-cfs tunnel is approximately two thirds of building the proposed 9,000-cfs twin tunnels but the water yield is much smaller."* The evaluation may be accurate; we are not attempting to dispute or refute the calculations and findings. However, with the numerous cost estimates for the conveyance features included in your own evaluations it is difficult to definitively understand the benefit cost ratio at which the evaluation arrives. A more comprehensive evaluation and identification of the appropriate assumptions would be valuable for those seeking to undertake independent analysis of cost-related information.
- The evaluation regarding the potential water supply yield in water recycling and water use efficiency projects that could be achieved from a \$3B investment in local and regional water supply projects requires additional analysis. Your evaluation indicates, that with respect to investments in local and regional water recycling projects and water conservation projects, *"it is doubtful that a \$3 billion investment would produce even 100,000 acre-feet of reliable new water supply in urban areas, and would do nothing for agricultural users."* This evaluation appears at odds with the Department of Water Resources' California Water Plan Update, which provides an analysis from which it may be concluded that a \$3 billion investment in water recycling projects could actually

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produce approximately 400,000 acre-feet of new water supplies (2009 Water Plan Update, Page 11-10). In addition, data developed by the Water Authority on local project costs and implementation also indicates that BDCP's estimate is very low. We believe this warrants additional analysis to better understand how your evaluation arrived at a potential yield of 100,000 acre-feet or less. We would be happy to share the Water Authority's data and our observations on local supply development with your staff.

- The evaluation with respect to the ability to export water from the south Delta following a significant seismic event stated that, *"It may take from one to 10 years to rebuild enough Delta levees to once again allow substantial exports from the south Delta."* While certainly more work remains to be completed in terms of the efforts that have been undertaken through the Delta Emergency Rock and Transfer Facilities Project and the Delta Emergency Response Program to secure water supply reliability following a significant seismic event, it is our understanding that significant progress has been made to reduce the worst-case export outage. A more comprehensive analysis on this issue would be beneficial.

We look forward to working with you to consider a BDCP project that is implementable, achieves the co-equal goals, and improves water supply reliability and is affordable within the San Diego region and the rest of the state. In addition, we look forward to arranging a meeting with you in the near-term to explore avenues for additional information sharing and the Water Authority's participation in the cost allocation negotiation process.

Sincerely,



Maureen A. Stapleton  
General Manager

Attachments:

1. January 2013 multi-agency letter regarding NRDC Portfolio Alternative
2. September 11, 2013 correspondence and Portfolio Alternative evaluation from Secretary John Laird

