

Dear members of the Water Board,

I am writing to you about large scale north/south water transfers and their impacts on groundwater and land subsidence. The tunnels will encourage and facilitate the transfer of water from farmers in the Sacramento Valley to farmers south of the Delta. Water transfers are often seem as providing more “flexibility” in the system. At first glance, this may seem to be true. But if you look under the hood, these water transfers will create a number of serious problems for the Sacramento Valley north of the Delta.

The Center for Food Safety discussed these issues in their 2015 comments on the tunnels EIR:

“The vast majority of these transfers are from agricultural users in the Sacramento Valley to agricultural users in the San Joaquin Valley, meaning that their purpose is to shift agricultural production from the north, where there is more water, to the south, where there is less. This is environmentally inefficient, and pencils out as economically efficient only because many of the costs of the transfers are borne by taxpayers or spread among all water users, not borne solely by the recipients of the transferred water.

Many, if not most, of the new water transfers will involve groundwater substitution. Increased groundwater pumping to facilitate water sales will result in depleted aquifers and groundwater subsidence. It will also result in dewatering of streams and rivers. The surface waterways of the Sacramento Valley are tightly connected to groundwater; surface water recharges groundwater aquifers while groundwater provides water for streams and rivers. Today, less than 30% of the consumptive water use in the Sacramento Valley is from groundwater. That percentage will certainly rise with the construction of the tunnels and the increased water transfers that will result, and with it land subsidence will increase and dewatering of rivers and streams will increase.

Land subsidence will have other devastating impacts, as is already evidenced in the San Joaquin Valley, where overpumping of groundwater has caused severe land subsidence. Impacts can include increased flooding; reduced freeboard and carrying capacity of canals, aqueducts, rivers, and flood control channels; damage to engineered structures like buildings, roads, bridges, pipelines, canals, aqueducts, levees, and wells; and loss of aquifer capacity.”

Many people think that the negative impacts from the tunnels are only to the Delta, but these water transfers will result in negative impacts to the Sacramento Valley watershed. This should not be allowed. I sincerely hope the Board will consider these negative impacts and deny permits for the tunnels.

Thank you

Bob Saunders, Sacramento