



Westlands Water District

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MEDIA RELEASE

Westlands Pulls Its Support from Bay Delta Conservation Plan In Response to Political Interference from Interior Department

In response to political interference from the Department of the Interior, the Westlands Water District today announced that it is withdrawing its support for the continued development of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP).

“As a public agency, Westlands cannot continue to spend millions of our ratepayers’ dollars on a project that is likely to deliver no more and potentially less water to the public than they are receiving today,” the district’s President, Jean P. Sagouspe, wrote in a letter to David Hayes, Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

Westlands and the other public water agencies that rely upon water supplies pumped through the Delta have invested nearly \$150 million and more than four years of effort to develop the BDCP program for fixing California’s broken water system. BDCP was created to help resolve regulatory shortages through a balanced plan to meet California’s co-equal objectives of repairing the Delta environment and restoring reliable, adequate water supplies for California.

“Through this action we are trying to get BDCP back on track,” said Thomas W. Birmingham, General Manager of Westlands. .

Over the last three years, federal regulations have reduced California’s public water supplies by more than one-third. But instead of working to solve the problems caused by these regulatory shortages, the Department of the Interior, at David Hayes’ direction, is now proposing to add even more regulatory restrictions, reducing even more drastically the deliveries that California’s farms and cities and two-thirds of the state’s residents depend on. .

Sagouspe’s letter expresses confidence that there are many dedicated employees within Reclamation, the Fish & Wildlife Service, and the National Marine Fisheries Service who could achieve a successful outcome of the BDCP process if they were not being subjected to “misinformed political interference.”

According to the letter, the Department of the Interior, through David Hayes, is trying to impose additional restrictions on California's public water supplies, but it is unable to explain what benefits these additional restrictions will provide to Delta fisheries. Nor can it put forward any scientific basis for these restrictions.

"Instead of working with the BDCP participants, Hayes is relying on the same special interests that have refused to join the BDCP process and have opposed its development from the beginning," Birmingham said. "He apparently agrees with the idea that 'success' in the Delta can be measured on the basis of how much water is taken away from the people of California."

"Such a destructive approach directly undermines the objective of fixing the water supply problem," the Westlands letter points out. "And without a project to fix the water supply problem, California won't have the means to restore the Delta either. In short, it is our view that your myopic and unscientific obstructionism will bring this entire effort at water reform and ecosystem restoration to a halt."

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