

Bay Delta Plan agreement opposed by 242 organizations

EWC COALITION LETTER REGARDING THE BAY DELTA CONSERVATION PLAN MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

November 16, 2011

by Dan Bacher

An unprecedented 242 environmental organizations, environmental justice groups, Native American Tribes, recreational angling organizations, commercial fishing groups and outdoor businesses sent a letter on November 16 to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and California Natural Resources Secretary John Laird urging them rescind a controversial Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP).

The state-federal BDCP aims to build a peripheral canal or tunnel to export more water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta to corporate agribusiness and Southern California. Delta advocates believe it would lead to the extinction of Central Valley steelhead, Sacramento River chinook salmon, Delta smelt, longfin smelt, green sturgeon, Sacramento splittail and other imperiled species ravaged by record water exports from 2003 to 2006 and in 2011.

The list of logos of organizations, tribes and businesses signing the letter alone is six pages long. This letter features probably the most extensive, diverse list of organizations ever mobilized in defense of our fish populations and waterways in California history.

For example, Tribes signing the letter include the Winnemem Wintu Tribe, Karuk Tribe and Modoc Nation. Environmental groups signing the letter include the Environmental Water Caucus, Sierra Club, Friends of the River, Restore the Delta, Save the American Association, Planning and Conservation League, California Water Impact Network, North Coast Environmental Center, and Environmental Protection Information Center

Commercial fishing groups include the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, Small Boat Commercial



Salmon Fisherman's Association and Half Moon Bay Trollers Association. Recreational angling groups and businesses include Water for Fish, the Golden Gate Salmon Association, Coastside Fishing Club, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, California Striped Bass Association, Black Bass Action Committee and the Fish Sniffer magazine. And these organizations are just a fraction of the 242 featured on the letter.

The groups, businesses and Tribes wrote, "The MOA was negotiated behind closed doors and only serves to reinforce the growing awareness that the BDCP is biased in favor of the export water contractors agenda to increase exports from the Delta and its connected rivers, despite the documented negative impacts those exports have had on endangered fish species, Delta habitats, water quality and public trust values. Our concerns are similar to the October 24 letter

you received from Congressmen Miller, Thompson, Matsui, McNerney, and Garamendi on the same subject.” (<http://www.c-win.org/content/dan-bacher-california-representatives-slam-closed-door-bay-delta-process.html>)

“We understand that MOAs are a regular aspect of the HCP and NCCP process. Nevertheless, this MOA makes unacceptable concessions to the exporters substantive agenda to influence the analytic process, extends no surprises guarantees to contractors in clear conflict with current law, and elevates the contractors to the status of permit holders for public works projects owned and operated by state and federal agencies,” the letter continued.

“We are deeply disappointed that the Obama and Brown Administrations have acquiesced to the export contractors efforts to twist what should have been a straightforward financing agreement for planning into a negotiation vehicle to successfully secure unprecedented influence over the HCP/NCCP process,” the letter states.

The letter concludes, “We request that you rescind this biased and unjustified MOA and prepare a new agreement that fairly includes the interests of all parties, including NGOs, Delta residents, farming and business organizations, environmental justice groups, recreational and commercial fishing organizations, and Native American Tribes. In the absence of such a fundamental rewrite, the undersigned organizations have little alternative but to oppose continuance of the BDCP process.

Bill Jennings from the California Sport-fishing Protection Alliance, Tom Stokely of the California Water Impact Network, Dick Pool from Water for Fish and the Golden Gate Salmon Association, Mark Rockwell of the Endangered Species Coalition, and Nick Di Croce and David Nesmith from the Environmental Water Caucus were instrumental in obtaining the 242 signatories to the letter. Credit must go to Bill Jennings for masterminding the sign-ons for this amazing achievement.

In addition to the unified group letter, organizations also sent letters of their own to oppose the state-federal plan to build the canal. For example, Dick Pool, President of Water for Fish, sent a strongly-worded letter to Salazar and Laird.

“This agreement corrupts the entire Bay Delta Conservation Plan and assures that there will only be one result of that plan - the export of additional water to the agricultural and Southern California interests at the expense of the water needs of the salmon, the Delta environment and every other water user in California,” wrote Pool.

“You are destroying any pretense of an open and transparent process that includes the interests of all the concerned parties including the salmon fishing industry. By doing this, it is our belief you are setting the stage for the extinction of the Central Valley salmon. By their past actions, it is very clear that the water exporters are unwilling to give up the water that salmon need to survive. You are giving them the power to destroy the salmon and 23,000 jobs in the industry,” Pool concluded.