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Governor's Budget is Mixed Bag for Environment, Climate Change Response

SACRAMENTO –Governor Jerry Brown's proposed 2016-17 Budget of nearly \$123 billion for California released today includes some improvements and some disappointment for funding for programs for California's environment.

Among the good aspects of the proposed budget are:

- Watershed restoration funding from Prop 1, including \$80 million for the Salton Sea, \$250 million to restore the Klamath River watershed, and \$45 million to implement the San Joaquin River settlements.
- Drought relief spending of \$323 million, including water use efficiency funds for both urban and agricultural sectors.
- About \$3 million in funding for climate modeling for hydrology of extreme climate scenarios, which can help guide water bond investments and groundwater management.
- The Air Resources Board's Low Carbon Transportation Program will receive an additional \$500 million from greenhouse gas reduction funds (cap-and-trade revenues) to provide incentives for clean advanced vehicles, including zero-emission cars, trucks and buses.
- About \$60 million in new funds are proposed to deal with deferred maintenance at state parks.

Among the disappointments in the proposed budget are:

- Wasting taxpayer funds to the tune of \$3.6 million to incorporate the proposed Delta tunnels construction—construction that has not been permitted and likely will never be permitted because of its enormous cost and environmental impacts—into the Delta Plan. The Delta Plan is designed for the long-term management of the San Francisco Bay Delta in a way that will preserve the Delta.
- New California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemptions provided to CalTrans that will undercut environmental protection and public health.
- Setting up a new and apparently duplicative Low Carbon Roads Program to be funded with \$100 million in money intended for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The funds would be more smartly assigned to an existing Active Transportation Program (ATP) that is underfunded and oversubscribed. The ATP provides a more reliable way to make sure projects that improve safe mobility for bicyclists and pedestrians also provide greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

- Continued delay of allocation and distribution of a billion dollars in cap-and-trade revenues that weren't allocated and distributed last year via the budget.
- Substantially less new money has been assigned to address deferred maintenance than the state parks system needs.

“This budget proposal shows that Governor Brown continues to be committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to addressing the drought. That’s good for California’s environment,” said Kathryn Phillips, Director of Sierra Club California. “But the budget proposal also shows that, unfortunately, he remains devoted to an outdated dream of building giant tunnels in the San Francisco Bay Delta that are certain to foul up that important estuary and river system. He continues to try to chip away at public transparency and the California Environmental Quality Act. And during his term in office, the state parks will continue to suffer from a huge backlog of deferred maintenance.”

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Sierra Club California is the legislative and regulatory advocacy arm of the 13 Sierra Club chapters in California, representing more than 380,000 members and supporters statewide.