



For Immediate Release
December 21, 2021

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Environmental Justice, Tribal, Conservation, and Fishing Groups Oppose “More Water Now” Ballot Measure

SACRAMENTO— Today, sixteen environmental justice, tribal, fishing, and conservation groups announced their opposition to the ballot measure initiative titled the “Water Infrastructure Funding Act of 2022” — or, as its promoters call it, the More Water Now initiative. The initiative is circulating for signatures and could potentially be on the November 2022 ballot.

Those groups announcing their opposition include: Sierra Club California, California Indian Environmental Alliance, Society of Native Nations, Idle No More, Restore the Delta, Azul, Golden State Salmon Association, Sunrise Movement OC, California Coastal Protection Network, Health the Bay, Surfrider Foundation, Los Angeles Waterkeeper, Orange County Coastkeeper, The River Project, Heal the Bay, and Social Eco Education.

Among the most harmful parts of the initiative is a provision that would amend the State Constitution to siphon money from the state General Fund to be allocated to provide minimum funding to environmentally destructive water projects. Earmarking these funds for storage and supply projects will severely impede funding for other public amenities that depend on the General Fund, such as health care, fire fighting, housing, and other public services.

These projects include dams, reservoirs, ocean desalination plants in Tsunami zones adjacent to the Ascon superfund site, and other projects that have documented negative impacts on the environment. How these projects are prioritized for funding is not dependent on efficiency, meaning that projects that are the least sustainable may secure funding. Moreover, there would be no environmental standards for the projects.

The initiative also includes a provision that would allow the Secretary of Natural Resources Agency to override decisions by the Coastal Commission - including approvals, denials, and/or issuances of permits that include requirements for environmental protection.

This measure would take California in the wrong direction regarding water supply management instead of investing in solutions we need to stay resilient in the face of the climate crisis.

As the [LA Times reported in early December](#), the measure's backers are largely agricultural businesses who would financially benefit from the measure passing.

Statements from tribal, environmental justice, and environmental organization leaders:

“Our oceans are in much need of healing. The ocean and all the waterways are life-giving as part of Earth Mother. The proposed plans and the earmarked funds will further desecrate Her health. As Indigenous People, we do not support Ecocide, and Terracide. We defend and honor Nature’s Rights; Her rights include defending and honoring the Spirit of Water.” **Lydia Poncé, Mayo, Quechua**

“California should immediately be supporting a widescale return of Tribal management of California's ecosystems. Tribal management created the resilient local food systems and groundwater recharge of our state's naturally filtered drinking water. Indigenous management of forested landscapes created balanced carbon sinks. In October 2020, Governor Newsom called for "accelerated use of nature-based solutions" to meet California's climate change goals (Executive Order N-82-20) and through Executive Order N-15-19 created the California Truth & Healing Council.

It is clear the Governor does not understand how the proposed Sites and Delta Conveyance projects would undercut those efforts and be a continuation of the destruction of local habitats, global climate pollution and the continuation of Tribal cultural genocide. These wide reaching projects are contrary to Tribal management systems and cannot be engineered to support restoration. Perhaps this is why the state is afraid to complete the EIR/EIS studies before these projects are approved.” - **Sherri Norris, Executive Director, California Indian Environmental Alliance**

“Committing unrestricted general fund dollars to water districts that are in climate change denial, that have used too much water for years unsustainably, and that refuse to address issues of water equity and affordability would make for dangerous policy and wasteful spending. General fund dollars are to support real time priorities in state spending, not special interests without accountability.” - **Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, Executive Director, Restore the Delta**

“If adopted, this initiative would be a step in the wrong direction for California. The climate crisis and its impacts on California water supplies demand that we move away from environmentally damaging storage projects like the type this ballot measure would fund. There are more reasonable and smarter ways to meet California’s water demand, and this initiative doesn’t provide those options.” -**Brandon Dawson, Director, Sierra Club California**

“Californians cannot afford to take away money from social programs to invest it in carbon-intensive water boondoggles that could further industrialize our coasts for private profit. Enabling polluters to gut coastal and environmental protections to erode the human right to water is a step backwards for environmental justice and climate goals.” - **Andrea Leon-Grossmann Director of Climate Action, Azul**