

Water Fail

The Governor's Delta Tunnel vision will destroy a vital ecosystem and hit Southern California ratepayers with higher costs for water they won't get.

On Nov. 17, the SLO County Board of Supervisors voted to execute a funding agreement in the amount of \$750,000 with the California Department of Water Resources for preliminary planning and design costs related to the State Water Delta Conveyance Project – aka the Delta Tunnel.

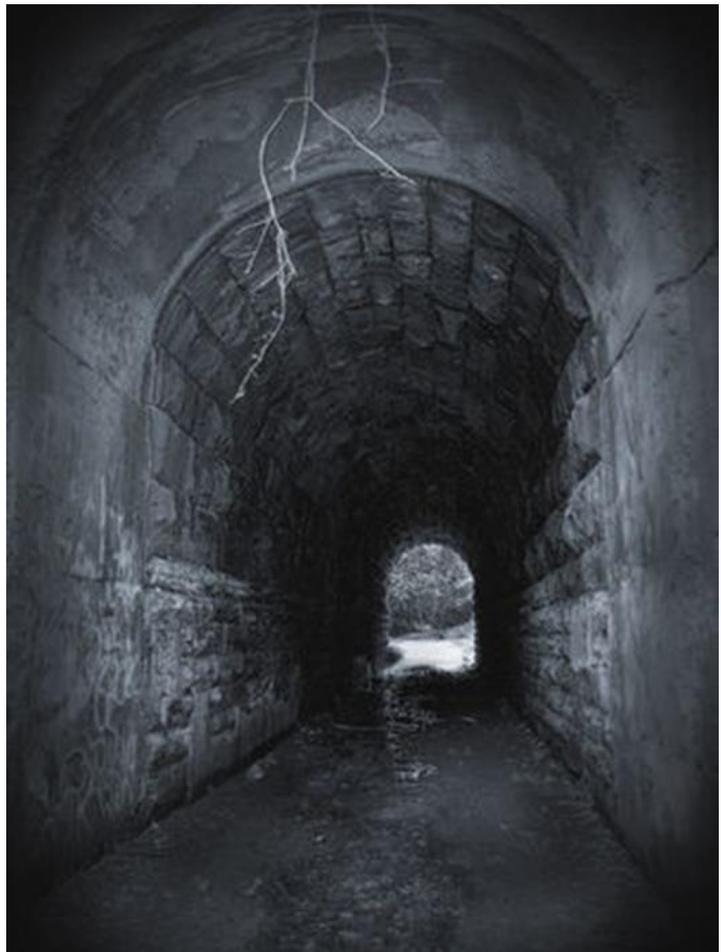
Three weeks later, the L.A. Metropolitan Water System followed suit, voting to spend \$59 million on Governor Newsom's proposed project.

At both meetings, the Sierra Club urged the two boards to reject the proposal. The expenditures come in the middle of a pandemic surge that is expected to further drag down California's economy.

The Bay-Delta spans about 1,100 square miles of lowlands east of San Francisco and south of Sacramento. The Delta is the largest estuary on the west coast of North America, providing breeding grounds and habitat for about 750 species, including salmon.

Newsom's proposal would build a 40-mile tunnel that would divert water from rivers that feed the San Francisco Bay-Delta and send it south. The tunnel is a remnant of Governor Jerry Brown's water plan, which itself was inspired by a decades-old proposal to build a peripheral canal that voters rejected in 1982.

The proposed tunnel is expected to ruin Delta habitat, encourage higher salinity, and promote water stagnation, leading to harmful algae blooms and ecosystem collapse within the Bay and the Delta.



The tunnel is expected to cost between \$16 and \$40 billion and require 15 to 20 years to construct. The tunnel has not completed its permitting, nor has funding for construction been determined, but water districts are being asked to cover the costs, even though drought conditions and climate change are expected to reduce the availability of water that would feed into the tunnel.

The funding decisions by the MWD, SLO County and other water purveyors in the state “essentially committed even more precious dollars to a project that won’t provide new water, doesn’t take into account climate change, will create an ecosystem collapse, and will saddle Southern California ratepayers with higher costs for water that won’t get delivered,” said Kathryn Phillips, Director of Sierra Club California.

“Fortunately, this huge investment is not the end of the story. There will be more chances in coming months and years to reconsider commitments to the tunnel boondoggle. Then, we hope, the board will abandon the tunnel and focus instead on developing local and regional water sources that provide good local and regional jobs and reliable supplies.”