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California Department of Water Resources Tries to Duck New Environmental Analysis on Tunnels Proposal

SACRAMENTO –Unable to secure certain funding for its proposed plan to spend more than \$16 billion to build two environmentally damaging tunnels through the San Francisco Bay Delta, the Department of Water Resources announced today that it will [build the two tunnels in stages](#).

The first stage will allow construction of a \$10.7-billion tunnel, followed at an undisclosed time later by a second tunnel at an undefined cost.

The two tunnels would be capable of moving 9,000 cubic-feet-per-second of water from the Sacramento River system north of the Delta to points south of the Delta.

The announcement, which had been rumored to be in the works, would potentially allow DWR to argue that it does not need to conduct a new environmental review of the impacts of the first, 6,000-cfs tunnel. During the environmental review of the two tunnels proposal certified last year, the agency refused to substantially consider a single tunnel as an alternative.

Statement from Kathryn Phillips, Director of Sierra Club California:

“The water agency is stretching to find ways to keep an unpopular and ill-conceived project alive. It doesn’t have the funding for the tunnels project it claims the state needs, so it just changes the project to fit the money it can find.

“The state agency appears to be trying to duck additional environmental review and mitigation by claiming to phase a project, rather than admitting it is a new proposal.

“DWR has a history of skirting reality to justify environmentally damaging construction. Mark this latest gambit as just more of the same.”

Sierra Club California is the legislative and regulatory advocacy arm of the 13 Sierra Club chapters in California, representing more than 400,000 members and supporters statewide.