



Oppose the Delta Tunnel: Talking Points

These talking points can be used at the **Tuesday December 8 meeting of the board of directors of the Metropolitan Water District.**

Meeting Schedule:

- **Tuesday 12/8 - 12pm** Board of Directors meeting

Sometimes the previous meetings run late and delay the start of the next meeting. You can hear if the meeting has begun on the phone line, or if you must wait for them to catch up.

Instructions to Call in:

During the initial public comment period which will be at the beginning of the meeting, call (404) 400-0335 and use code: 9601962 and give your name. If there are many callers, you will be added to a queue and put on hold.

There is no live video feed unless there are slideshows, [but you can listen live here](#). Callers will be limited to **three minutes** per comment, but there are no limits on the number of speakers.

Remember: You must make your comments early in the meeting, during the public comment period and BEFORE any agenda items are presented.

MWD serves Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Ventura, San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

Talking Points

- I OPPOSE the Delta Tunnel and urge you to choose Option 4 and vote against funding it.
- The Delta Tunnel project is estimated to cost \$16 billion, before inflation, and up to \$40 billion, with MWD primarily picking up as much as 60% of the cost and pushing that cost onto ratepayers. Choose Option 4 and Vote NO.
- In the last 90 years, every time a Delta conveyance has come up for a vote, it gets shot down by the public. This plan is outdated and doesn't take into account the ways in which the world has changed--including through the impact of climate change.
- MWD should focus on local, sustainable water sources and prepare for climate change's impact on the future. The tunnel will not ensure a steady supply of water and we will have to find other sources. Why waste money planning and building it when we could instead look for better regional and local solutions?
- MWD ratepayers will see higher water bills and property taxes. MWD already spent \$175 million to buy islands in the Delta to make way for the tunnel project, then another \$50m was pledged in April for planning.
- MWD could be on the hook for \$199 million over the next four years just for planning the tunnel. To build the project, MWD will be expected in 2024 to devote at least \$11 billion to actual construction of the tunnel--and that will be paid without any guarantee that there will be sufficient water flowing through the tunnels to make it worth it.

- MWD's tunnel plans disregard climate change. There is no certainty that there will be enough water to make the tunnel worth it. In fact, scientists are predicting less precipitation and lower river flows available in Northern California in coming years.
- Local and regional projects should include improvements to existing infrastructure around the state, and investments in local, sustainable water sourcing- like conservation, groundwater remediation and recharge through water recycling, stormwater capture, and brackish water desalination.
- DWR claims that the single tunnel project will offer water supply reliability with the least amount of environmental damage possible. But in reality, the tunnel project offers NO reliability, incurs MASSIVE environmental damage, decimates Delta communities, and results in HIGHER water costs for Southern Californians.
- MWD's board should urge DWR to seriously analyze the "commonsense" alternative in the environmental impact report for the tunnel that includes no construction of the tunnel and prioritizes investment in- and the use of- projects and technologies that reuse, recycle and conserve local and regional water supplies.
- Local and regional water supplies are the only supplies that are truly resilient to the uncertainties of climate change and seismic risks.
- Californians value the protection and preservation of our unique natural resources. A "commonsense" alternative protects the Delta by reducing the need for Delta exports and allowing more water to flow through the ecosystem for the benefit of Delta salmon, smelt and other fish species as well as all the wildlife that depend on the ecosystem.

BACKGROUND:

The Delta Tunnel

The Delta Tunnel is an environmentally destructive, expensive, unreliable boondoggle of a project. It would essentially build a giant tunnel that would divert water from the river system that feeds into the San Francisco Bay Delta (located adjacent to Stockton) to send south to the San Joaquin Valley farmers and urban users in Southern California.

The Delta is the largest estuary on the west coast of North America and is critical for fish and wildlife and a linchpin in the state's salmon industry.

For more information about the proposed Delta tunnel, it's impacts and its history, see the factsheets prepared by Sierra Club California staff and volunteers and posted on our [website page devoted to the Delta](#).

The current tunnel project is estimated to cost about \$16 billion, before inflation, and up to \$40 billion. MWD is expected to pick up as much as 60% of the cost and push that cost onto ratepayers. MWD ratepayers will see higher water bills and property taxes but see no new water, given climate change and the changing weather patterns influencing Northern California river flows.

MWD has already spent \$175 million to buy islands in the Delta to dump muck on, then another \$50 million for planning was pledged in April. In December, the California Department of Water

Resources (DWR), the state agency that is proposing to build the tunnel, will ask for the downpayment on a total bill of at least \$199 million (as of 11/25/20) just for planning the tunnel. Then in 2024, the state will ask for at least another \$11 billion from MWD. That \$11 billion represents about two-thirds of the cost of the tunnel that isn't expected to deliver new water.

This is at a time when we are struggling from the pandemic and recession, and agencies are trying to find more sustainable sources of water and want to be less dependent on imported water.

Alternatives

Additionally, by law, DWR must consider a "no construction" alternative in their environmental impact report for the tunnel. But it should also consider what we refer to as the "commonsense alternative," and that would be one that does not include construction of a tunnel, but does involve investment around the state in other projects that will make regions, including Southern California, less dependent on the Delta. These are projects that help conservation and efficiency of water use, water recycling, stormwater capture, groundwater cleanup, and the like.