

The Water Tunnels and Los Angeles

What is the BDCP/Peripheral Tunnels project?

The Water Tunnels are a \$20–50 billion plan to build two massive 35-mile tunnels to divert the Sacramento River in order to increase water exports from the San Francisco Bay Delta. Not only has Governor Brown proposed the plan, but

he has been given the sole power to approve the project by the State Legislature. The project is nearly identical to the peripheral canal proposal of 1982, which was rejected by voters in a statewide referendum.

Who would get the water?

The Kern County Water Agency and the Westlands Water District, which represent California’s most powerful corporate agribusinesses, would receive the majority of the water from the tunnels. These interests export water-intensive crops such as cotton and almonds, and sell taxpayer-subsidized water, originally intended for farming, for private profit.

In addition, the Metropolitan Water District (MWD), which imports water from the Bay-Delta and sells it to cities across southern California, also wants more water. However, Los Angeles and Long Beach are actually planning to buy less imported water from the MWD, and Santa Monica is planning to eliminate its water purchases from the MWD altogether in favor of more cost-effective local water-supply options.

Who would pay for these tunnels?

Water ratepayers in southern California would be responsible for about 30 percent of the \$20–50 billion costs for construction and operation of the tunnels. Ratepayers in Los Angeles alone would see their water bills rise to pay their \$1.6–6 billion share for the tunnels. Corporate agricul-





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ture interests would also pay, but at a cheaper rate. Urban ratepayers and taxpayers already subsidize water for Westlands and Kern, and these tunnels would make that subsidy much larger. Finally, California taxpayers would be on the hook for \$3–5 billion for clean-up and mitigation costs from the tunnels.

Doesn't LA need more water from northern California?

Because of improved efficiency, LA actually uses less water today than it did 30 years ago, despite population growth of over 1 million people. Water use has dropped 15 percent in the last few years. The LA Department of Water and Power's (LADWP) water plan now calls for doubling local water-supply sources, fixing its aging infrastructure and reducing its purchases of imported water from the MWD. Thus, there is no need for more water from northern California.

What about drought and climate change?

Because periods of less rainfall are common in southern California, LA has an effective and proven plan that prioritizes the most important uses of water in a drought. About 40 percent of LA's water use is for outdoor irrigation, which is scaled back when there is less rainfall. In addition, both the LADWP and the MWD have invested billions in additional reserves, such as the Diamond Valley Lake. Finally, over 66 percent of all water exported from the Delta currently goes to agricultural uses, which could be made available for urban use if absolutely necessary. Should climate change result in new patterns of precipitation, local water

agencies will need to diversify their water portfolio by maximizing and retaining local sources of water.

What threat does a major earthquake pose to LA's water supply?

An earthquake in southern California is a severe threat to the LADWP's aging water system, which has over 1,000 water main breaks per year. Ratepayer dollars should be prioritized to fix and upgrade our pipes and treatment plants so they can be prepared for the next "big one." In addition, diversifying our water supply by increasing LA's groundwater and capturing stormwater will help preserve access to water after a big earthquake.

While an earthquake in northern California poses a much smaller risk, Westlands and the MWD are exaggerating an earthquake's potential to disrupt water exports from the Bay-Delta as a way to justify spending billions on the tunnels, masking the fact that they want more water for themselves at our expense.

Is this tunnel project the same project as the "Bay Delta Conservation Plan?" How will it affect the San Francisco Bay Delta?

Tunnel proponents have come up with the title BDCP as a way to mislead and confuse people about the tunnels. Diverting fresh water from the Sacramento River would have a devastating effect on the fragile San Francisco Bay Delta and its salmon populations, which nearly collapsed in 2008. That's why environmental groups and fishing groups across California strongly oppose these tunnels.

**For more info and to get involved, visit:
www.foodandwaterwatch.org/california**