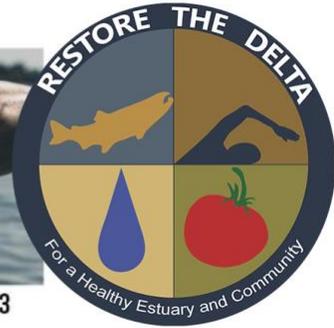




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April 9, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California  
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Request for Stay of Public Processes for Delta Conveyance Planning During Novel COVID-19 Pandemic**

Dear Governor Newsom,

First and foremost, I want to communicate to you our sincere respect and admiration for your leadership during the COVID19 pandemic. Your leadership has been effective, fair, sensitive, and simply for the people. We are grateful for your order calling for the water shutoff moratorium. We are grateful for your work and support of Mayor Michael Tubbs' initiative to bring COVID testing and resources to assist with homelessness to San Joaquin County, and initiatives in support of our large environmental justice community.

We are grateful that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is seeking to limit temporarily sportfishing in high traffic hotspots. The average age in the interior rural Delta is forty-nine years old, higher than the average age in Italy. We cannot risk the health of older, rural Delta residents who need safe access to local store and food services.

With all that you are working on presently, I am uncomfortable having to bring Delta issues to your attention. Sadly, I am left with no further option because my repeated requests to DWR, the California Natural Resources Agency, and the Design Construction Authority for the Delta Conveyance Project have not been truly heard. I am respectfully requesting on behalf of our 60,000 members, the majority of whom are Delta residents, that you direct the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority (DCA) to pause all Delta Conveyance Project planning and engineering design processes that require Delta stakeholder engagement during the COVID-19 crisis, until Delta communities can fully participate in these processes. We request that you ask the DCA to pause its processes that require public participation, including Stakeholder Engagement Committee meetings, so that the Delta tunnel engineering design can be informed by the meaningful public input the DCA has

committed to consider. We also ask that you direct DWR and other resource agencies to extend public comment periods by at least 45 days beyond the end of the declared emergency.

Rural Delta residents are struggling with their own jobs and families, included complicated and difficult farming operations in order to protect themselves and their employees during the pandemic. They are simply exhausted, and when community organizers attempt to reach them, we are finding that they do not have the intellectual, physical, or emotional bandwidth to think through and comment on the proposed Delta Conveyance Project. Most farmers cannot be reached easily by phone or email right now. A great deal of outreach to Delta farmers is completed by organizers who drive out for face-to-face visits to talk about water issues. Stakeholder Engagement Committee members cannot do the necessary outreach to get input from their communities presently.

Furthermore, rural Delta communities are struggling with food deserts in the Isleton area and for farmworkers throughout the Delta. The Delta's limited internet access is making it difficult for families with school-aged children to ensure their children finish their studies for this school year.

In the urban Delta, social justice and environmental justice groups have been working to deliver food to communities in need in South Stockton, advocating to keep local schools closed due to the unfortunate leadership of school board members attempting to politicize closures, advocating with county public health officials for adequate COVID19 testing, reporting, and adequate health clinic operations, and organizing volunteers to sew CDC compliant masks for healthcare workers.

Furthermore, San Joaquin County is experiencing higher mortality rates from COVID19, percentage-wise, than other areas in California and the country. Reports this morning from the Stockton Record indicate that 20% of San Joaquin County will be unemployed by May. Our community has the fourth highest rate of asthma in the United States, which means that a large number of our residents cannot risk infection, and have to follow the strictest shelter in place guidelines.

Consequently, we are finding that residents who should be brought into tunnel planning processes in order to give meaningful community input are responding to phone and online organizing efforts with statements such as, "Why are you asking me that about now?" About one-third of Stocktonians live at the bottom 95<sup>th</sup> percentile for environmental health. These same people are literally fighting for their lives, their economic well-being, and are under great emotional distress, just like other residents in poor urban neighborhoods throughout America. They frankly cannot focus on how one of California's largest infrastructure projects will impact their community, water supply, and environment.

There is a critical distinction between participating in an on-line meeting and actually fulfilling the stated purpose of the DCA's Stakeholder Engagement Committee (SEC) -- through which I am to engage with a broader community as an "exchange" of information to provide input to the

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SEC. Furthermore, DWR's pursuit of action by the Central Valley Flood Protection Board with respect to effects on the State Plan of Flood Control is also a critical issue to South Stockton residents who, according to the State's Fourth Climate Change Assessment, are at the highest risk for a significant flood event than any other urban community as a result of climate change impacts. South Stockton residents also should be allowed to engage in that process in a meaningful and complete manner.

Governor Newsom, in a post-COVID world, it will be more important than ever to end the old binaries and create a water system that will restore the Delta, protect water supplies in a changing climate, and manage flood events so as to augment water supplies and protect people living within the Delta's environmental justice communities. To achieve that end, we need to follow the African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together." To go together, Delta communities cannot be left behind in planning and public processes during the COVID19 pandemic.

We thank you for considering our request to suspend Delta Conveyance Project public processes until 45 days after the COVID19 pandemic subsides to safe levels.

If we can be of any assistance in sharing pandemic news and critical information about available resources to Delta residents, we stand ready to assist the state.

Sincerely yours,



Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla  
Executive Director  
Restore the Delta

Mayor Michael Tubbs, City of Stockton  
Senate President pro Tempore, Toni G. Atkins  
Assemblymember Susan Talamantes Eggman, Assembly District 13  
Assemblymember Jim Frazier, Assembly District 11  
Assemblymember Jim Cooper, Assembly District 9  
Senator Cathleen Galgiani, Senate District 5  
Senator Bill Dodd, Senate District 3  
Senator Steven Glazer, Senate District 7  
Kathy Miller, San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors  
Don Notolli, Sacramento County Board of Supervisors  
Karla Nemeth, Director, California Department of Water Resources

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Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency

Jared Blumenfeld, Secretary, Cal EPA

E. Joaquin Esquivel, Chair, State Water Resources Control Board

Leslie M. Gallagher, Executive Director, Central Valley Flood Protection Board

Kathryn Mallon, Executive Director, Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority

Doug Obegi, Natural Resources Defense Council

Osha Meserve, Soluri Meserve

LLP Adam Keats, Adam Keats Law

Kathryn Phillips, Sierra Club California

Brandon Dawson, Sierra Club California

Kelley Taber, Somach, Simmons and Dunn

Dillon Delvo, Little Manila Rising

Nicholas Hatten, LGBTQ+ Social Justice

Tama Brisbane, With Our Words

Sammy Nunez, Fathers & Families of San Joaquin