

Proposal for a Portfolio Based Alternative for the BDCP

Summary: On January 16, 2013, a coalition of conservation and business groups proposed an alternative to the Bay Delta Conservation Plan. Their proposal, which they call a “Portfolio Based Alternative”, features a 3000 CFS North Delta diversion facility and tunnel and reduced Delta habitat restoration than is currently being proposed by the Natural Resources Agency. Additionally, the proposal includes investments in Delta levees, improvements in storage, conservation, recycling, and other local water supplies south of Delta. The purpose of this information item is to brief the Council on this alternative, which these groups and several Bay Area and Southern California water agencies have asked be evaluated in the BDCP’s EIR/EIS.

On January 16, a coalition of four conservation groups and two business organizations proposed that the Bay Delta Conservation Plan’s (BDCP) environmental impact report/environmental impact statement (EIR/EIS) consider an alternative featuring a smaller North Delta diversion facility and tunnel, additional investments in Delta levees, reduced Delta habitat restoration, and improvements in storage, conservation, recycling, and other local water supplies south of Delta. The groups have termed this a “portfolio based alternative”. The alternative was advanced by the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Bay Institute, the Planning and Conservation League, Defenders of Wildlife, the Contra Costa Council, and Environmental Entrepreneurs. The alternative is described in Attachment 1 which is a compilation of various documents which includes 1. Letter dated January 16, 2013 re: A Portfolio-Based Conceptual Alternative for BDCP; 2. Portfolio Based Conceptual Alternative Fact Sheet 3; January 16, 2013 BDCP Alternative News Release; 4. Portfolio Based BDCP Conceptual Alternative. Seven water agencies in the Bay Area and San Diego County have also asked that the portfolio based alternative be considered in the BDCP’s EIR/EIS. The water agencies’ letter dated January 16, 2013 about the alternative is Attachment 2.

The Delta Reform Act requires that, for purposes of potential incorporation into the Delta Plan, the BDCP comply with CEQA, including a comprehensive review and analysis of, among other things, a “reasonable range of Delta conveyance alternatives” (Water Code Section 85320(b)(2)(B)). The Council has not previously expressed its views about this desirable range of alternatives, commenting only that “the BDCP EIR/EIS should demonstrate that its screening process has included a wide range of conveyance alternatives” and that appropriate criteria be used to select alternatives for more detailed evaluation (Joe Grindstaff to Russell Stein, April 18, 2012).

Representatives of the Planning and Conservation League, Contra Costa Water District, and San Diego County Water Agency will brief the Council on their proposal.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1: Letter dated January 16, 2013 re: Portfolio-Based Conceptual Alternative for BDCP, Portfolio Based Conceptual Alternative Fact Sheet, January 16, 2013 BDCP Alternative News Release, Portfolio Based BDCP Conceptual Alternative

Attachment 2: Letter dated January 13, 2013 to Secretary Salazar, Secretary Laird, Deputy Secretary Meral and Commissioner Conner

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