

Statement of
The Honorable Brett R. Barbre
Director, Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC)
&
Director, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) representing
Municipal Water District of Orange County

June 13, 2019

Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member McClintock, distinguished Members of the Committee, my name is Brett R. Barbre and I am an elected Director of the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC) and am an appointed Director of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) as one of four representatives from MWDOC. I appreciate the opportunity to be here this morning to share a few thoughts regarding the impact on the Southern California water supply due to the lack of resolution with the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta.

We have a water system in California that is broken under the weight of environmental problems and regulations, lack of investment and outright political obstructionism. When the rain and snow returned to California this winter and the rivers began to rise in Northern California, our water system in the Bay Delta had to decrease pumping rather than take advantage of the opportunity to store as much as possible for future use.

From January to the end of May this year, over 22 million acre feet of water has been allowed to flow out to the Pacific Ocean which, with a proper storage and distribution system, could have easily been captured and stored for later use. During that same time period, due to the latest BiOPS, the combined CVP and SWP exports from the Delta was only 1.7 million acre feet.

Remember, these numbers are occurring in a year with the greatest rainfall on record, and yet both the CVP and SWP allocation is 70%. This is simply unacceptable.

The California water system has been living off the investments of past generations, and the bill of inaction is coming due.

Moving forward, unless we fix the Delta, coupled with an increase in the amount of above ground storage, both north and south of the Delta, California will be sentenced to a permanent drought status and will be subjected to onerous policies driven by unelected and unaccountable officials who believe water shortages are created by green grass and swimming pools, not due to the lack of storage and the inability to move water freely throughout the system.

There have been significant investments over the past generation at the local level, most notably in Southern California within the MWD service area. But statewide the system is largely the same one we had more than a generation ago even though the state population has more than doubled. Keep in mind that the planning for the State Water Project began in 1956 and the first deliveries to Southern California occurred in 1971 – nearly 50 years ago.

What we need in California is a new generation in investment and a new management ethic that doesn't look for reasons to deny water for the economy.

The design of the water system in the Delta needs to be improved so that water can be captured in the northern Delta and transported to the aqueduct system in the southern Delta. We must remember that this supply is vital for the economies of the Silicon Valley, the Central Valley and \$1 trillion Southern California economy.

Versions of this improvement have been around for decades, and it is beyond time to make this system investment. As far back as 1973 when the Delta Environmental Advisory Committee was formed, it was determined that a properly designed facility that eliminates the need to use the Delta as a conveyance facility would guarantee that the affected environments would be adequately protected.

Governor Jerry Brown's administration moved forward with this project, known as California WaterFix. Recently, without any scientific or reasonable justification, Governor Newsom stopped the project. The decision to build the twin tunnels was the result of decades of peer reviewed scientific studies. One must wonder what science Governor Newsom is now asking his team to ignore in order to justify cancelling the twin tunnels.

We simply need to regain our ability to capture water when it is wet so the economy has supplies when it is dry. We have lost that ability for various environmental and regulatory reasons and strangling the economy's water supply is not good for the environment; it is not good for anyone; it puts at risk our nation's food security.

In contrast to the much maligned High Speed Rail project, the California Water Fix will not be built using any state or federal funds. It will be paid for in the manner most water projects should be funded, which is by ratepayers who will benefit from such an investment.

The basic reason for California WaterFix is straightforward. We need intakes in two different places in the Delta, north and south, in order to reliably divert water and avoid conflicts with endangered species; we need a flexible, modern system.

The California WaterFix does not solve all of the state's water problems but it would eliminate a bottleneck in the heart of the statewide system. California will need to continue to develop more local supplies such as what we have done in Southern California.

The cynics say that Southern California should build desal to replace the SWP allocation. That makes zero sense because in order to replace the 2 million acre feet of SWP water with desal, MWD would need to build 40 new plants - one every 4.5 miles – from Ventura to San Diego.

Imagine the logic of that plan: we would allow fresh water, which could easily be captured and delivered statewide, to flow out to the ocean where it would become salt water. Then we would expend millions of dollars and countless green house gas emissions worth of energy to extract the salt from the formerly fresh water to serve to our citizens.

In 1977, which was the driest year on record, the State Water Project was able to deliver 400,000 af of water to MWD; in 2014, just 37 years later, MWD received 100,000 af. We seem to be going backwards, not progressing.

Across the state we need more above ground storage, north of the Delta and south of the Delta. Storing water away in the wet years means more for both the economy and the environment in dry years. We have long tried to run this water system with inadequate storage and the problem reveals itself every time it stops raining. We need to stop fooling ourselves that we can be the 7th largest economy in the world without a world class water system that is up to today's challenges.

This concludes my statement and will be happy to respond to any questions.

Thank you.

