



DELTA DEFENDERS

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March 16, 2020

Sent via email

Karla Nemeth, Director
and Carrie Buckman, Environmental Program Manager

California Department of Water Resources
1416 9th Street, Room 1115-1
Sacramento, CA 95814

Tony Estremera, Chair, Board of Directors
and Sarah Palmer, Chair, Delta Stakeholder Engagement Committee
and Kathryn Mallon, Executive Director

Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority
1121 L Street, Suite 1045
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Please don't push forward with the Delta tunnel stakeholder engagement process during a public health emergency

Dear Ms. Nemeth, Ms. Buckman, Mr. Estremera, Ms. Palmer and Ms. Mallon,

As you know, the Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority (DCA) is conducting Delta stakeholder engagement for the Department of Water Resources (DWR) with respect to the engineering design for the Delta Conveyance / Delta tunnel, with meetings of the Delta Stakeholder Engagement Committee every two weeks.

About a third of the DCA Delta Stakeholder Engagement Committee members were unable to attend the Wednesday, March 11 meeting. Yet at the end of the meeting, Sarah Palmer, the Chair of the DCA Delta Stakeholder Engagement Committee announced that the next Delta Stakeholder Engagement Committee meeting would be held in two weeks – on March 25. The DCA website now states that “DCA Board meetings and Stakeholder Engagement Meetings will be accessible through video, phone or live (we will still set up a location where the public and SEC members can join.)”

Seriously? During this public health emergency, the Department of Water Resources and the Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority are expecting Delta residents and Delta stakeholders to go through a 95 page PowerPoint containing detailed information on two alternative alignments for the proposed Delta tunnel project? We are supposed to evaluate proposed mitigations and communicate any concerns to our “representatives” on the Delta Stakeholder Engagement Committee? And if non-committee members want to ask questions, we’ll have to show up at a physical location?

We ask the question, why is the DCA and DWR continuing to rush forward with the Delta tunnel engineering design? Why does the Delta stakeholder engagement process have to be pushed forward during a public health emergency, regardless of what Delta residents and Delta stakeholders are dealing with?

Delta counties, Delta cities, Delta legacy communities, Delta businesses, Delta families, and organizations representing Delta interests are all currently dealing with a rapidly emerging public health crisis. New COVID-19 cases caused by community transmission are announced daily in Sacramento County, and in the Bay Area. Classes and public events have been cancelled, including fundraising events for Delta organizations. Bars, brew pubs and winery tasting rooms are closing, per Governor Newsom’s guidance. Restaurants are trying to figure out how to stay in business. Other businesses are dealing with loss of income and shifting employees to home work, or laying them off. Families are implementing social distancing, and starting to see economic impacts from the crisis. Some are dealing with potential exposures or even respiratory infections and a shortage of COVID-19 test kits. There are runs on disinfecting supplies, paper products, and even food at local stores.

We respectfully ask you to delay further Delta stakeholder engagement activities until the national and state public health emergency is more under control. We also respectfully submit that a delay is warranted anyway. A delay will allow the DCA’s engineering design process and the Delta stakeholder engagement process to be informed by alternatives submitted as part of the CEQA scoping.

A delay will also allow the DCA to increase transparency about the Delta Stakeholder Engagement Committee. To date, there has been almost no organized online outreach by Delta Stakeholder Engagement Committee members to Delta stakeholders, and

there has been no publication of the questionnaires given to the Delta Stakeholder Engagement Committee members, or the answers to the questionnaires.

We request that you post the DCA's current questionnaire on the proposed Delta tunnel engineering design on the DCA website, as well as SEC members' past responses to the DCA's questionnaires. While we appreciate that a partial list of responses by DCA staff to questions posed by Delta Stakeholder Engagement Committee members was posted, we request that a complete list of responses be posted.

In addition, there is no list of questions posed by members of the public at the DCA's Delta Stakeholder Engagement Committee meetings, and the DCA has not provided answers to those questions. We respectfully request that the list be posted on the DCA website, and the questions answered.

Sincerely,

/s/

Donis Pacini Whaley

Donis Pacini Whaley

Facilitator, Delta Defenders

Cc:

The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California

The Honorable Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency

Susan Tatayon, Chair, Delta Stewardship Council

Jessica Pearson, Executive Officer, Delta Stewardship Council

Oscar Villegas, Chair, Delta Protection Commission

Don Nottoli, Vice Chair, Delta Protection Commission

Erik Vink, Director, Delta Protection Commission

Skip Thomson, Solano County Supervisor

Chuck Winn, San Joaquin County Supervisor

Diane Burgis, Contra Costa County Supervisor