Workshop Highlights Regional Importance of Water from Bay-Delta

**Millions would be impacted if imported water supply interrupted**

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Nearly 100 community leaders from throughout the Inland Empire learned about the proposed infrastructure and conservation improvements to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta during a Bay Delta Conservation Plan workshop on Friday, June 28.

The event was co-hosted by Eastern Municipal Water District and Western Municipal Water District. It was held at Western’s headquarters in Riverside and was one of several workshops being hosted throughout Southern California this summer coordinated by the Southern California Water Committee.

“We are asking you to help us get the word out,” EMWD General Manager Paul D. Jones II said. “Share your knowledge about how critically important the Bay Delta Conservation Plan and the twin tunnel conveyance improvements are for our Southern California communities.”

“The Bay Delta Conservation Plan will give us a reliable, year-in, year-out supply of water from the Delta. The low salinity level of this Delta water supply will also help us ensure the sustainability of our local groundwater and our water recycling program.”

The Delta provides drinking water for 25 million Californians and is the irrigation water source for more than half of the fruits and vegetables harvested nationally each year. The Delta through the State Water Project provides 30 percent of Southern California’s water supply.

“The Bay Delta is a crucial component to Southern California’s water supply and economy. If we were unable to receive water from the Bay-Delta it would severely impact Southern California’s economy,” said Western’s General Manager John Rossi. “That’s why we’re committed to getting the message out about the Bay-Delta, and why it’s so important to all of us.”

The two-hour workshop began with a presentation from Dr. Jerry Meral, deputy secretary for the California Natural Resources Agency. Meral detailed the conservation plan and its benefit to the hundreds of species of fish, wildlife and plants that call the Delta home.

More than 20 percent of the state’s water supply flows through the Delta and the region produces more than $700 million of agriculture per year. Meral spoke at length about the BDCP’s role in co-equally protecting both fish and water supply reliability.

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The BDCP will help protect dozens of endangered species and allow for more than 100,000 acres of habitat restoration and preservation.

“By protecting the fish, we will preserve the water supply,” Meral said. “The BDCP doesn’t just build tunnels. We have more than 20 different conservation methods that will save the fish and ensure the water supply and do the things that should have been done a long time ago.

Meral was followed by Dave Mraz, chief of the Delta Levees and Engineering Branch of the Department of Water Resources. Mraz discussed the failing levee system in the Delta and the impact that further erosion or a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or severe storm, would have on the Delta. The Delta is home to 1,100 miles of levees and many islands that are below the Delta’s water level.

Brian Thomas, managing director of PFM Group, detailed the economic impact of the BDCP, cautioning that delaying action would result in future cost increases.

Up to 230,000 jobs and billions of dollars in economic impact could be lost in the event of a significant levee breach that resulted in the water supply from the Delta being cut off for a year or longer.

“There will be a steady deterioration of our water supply if we do nothing,” Thomas said. “This is an investment in infrastructure, which is an investment in our future.”

Following the presentations, the panel fielded a variety of questions from those in attendance, which included Riverside County Supervisors, City Council members, state legislative staff, community leaders and water industry staff and elected officials.

Questions included topics, such as reliability, environmental impacts, financing and water supply sources. All involved were encouraged to contact their local agencies to assist with community outreach to help spread the importance of the BDCP.

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