





MYTHS and **FACTS**

About the Delta Conveyance Project


 **MYTH:** The tunnel is nothing more than a “water grab” by Southern California.

 **FACT:** The purpose of the Delta Conveyance Project is to ensure the reliability of water supplies due to climate change for communities and farmland in the Bay Area, the Central Coast and the Central Valley, as well as Southern California. Climate change is expected to lead to a 10% loss of water supplies across the state by 2040, resulting in a decline in water available to 27 million people who rely on the State Water Project. The Delta Conveyance Project will protect against those losses with infrastructure that can help capture water during high flow storm events.


 **MYTH:** This project is a waste of money that only helps certain political interests.

 **FACT:** Protecting the health and safety of all Californians by providing access to affordable, reliable, and clean water is a nonpartisan issue. Precipitation patterns are changing across California, bringing less snow and more rain. Water supplies are declining as a result and will continue to decline as future decades get hotter and drier. The Delta Conveyance Project will directly confront these climate-driven changes by capturing excess river flows during big, but infrequent, storms. Those diversions will be regulated to meet all fishery and water quality requirements and stay within the limits of State Water Project water rights. Twenty-seven million people rely on the State Water Project and their future water security is not a waste.


 **MYTH:** No new water is created by the tunnel.

 **FACT:** The Delta Conveyance Project will capture water that would be otherwise unavailable without the project. The project will capture and move water from high flows created by big but infrequent storm events. Because of outdated infrastructure, most years, we miss opportunities to capture water. From January through April 11, 2024 alone, had it been in place, the Delta Conveyance Project would have captured about 909,000 acre-feet of water—enough for over 9.5 million people for a year, all while satisfying water quality and endangered species regulations. Modeling to the year 2070 shows that even in the face of climate change, the project would help protect future water supplies.


 **MYTH:** Upgrading Delta levees would be better than building a tunnel.

 **FACT:** Solely upgrading levees is not a realistic way to protect the reliability of State Water Project deliveries. It would not address rising sea levels, would not adapt to changing precipitation patterns and extreme weather events, and would not guard water supplies against earthquake. The existing State Water Project facilities are currently limited to one diversion point in the South Delta that will continue to be constrained by location, fish and water quality restrictions, and capacity. Upgrading levees would not resolve those limitations. However, DWR has invested millions of dollars to reinforce Delta levees through various projects and programs and will continue to support these efforts.

 **MYTH:** The project will negatively impact the Delta and surrounding communities.

 **FACT:** While some noise, traffic, and disruption is inevitable with a major construction effort of this scale, significant work has been taken over several years to avoid and minimize impacts through project design, including moving the underground tunnel route out of the central Delta and closer to Interstate 5, eliminating most barging and all barge landings, reducing pile driving, undergrounding power near sandhill crane habitat, minimizing acreage needed to store tunnel material, creating a design with no need for a new intermediate forebay, and overall reducing the project footprint. These efforts have helped to minimize noise, traffic, power needs, aesthetic effects, boating and waterway effects, and land disturbances. Additionally, DWR is pursuing a Community Benefits Program as part of project implementation to address the reality that project impacts are local to the Delta.

 **MYTH:** The project doesn't protect fish.

 **FACT:** The Delta Conveyance Project reduces fishery conflicts in the south Delta and allows the State of California to both protect fish species and protect water supply reliability. The Delta Conveyance Project would make it possible to move more water during high flow events. This is particularly critical when DWR takes action—as it has done since early February of this year—to improve conditions for fish by reducing pumping in the south Delta.

⊗ **MYTH:** The project is “one of the biggest salmon killing projects in state history.”

✔ **FACT:** Assertions that the project will harm salmon are simply not supported by the evidence in the project’s environmental analysis, which shows that mitigation and design features minimize potential impacts (e.g. habitat restoration and state-of-the-art fish screens). Moreover, DWR will obtain appropriate approvals from state and federal fishery agencies to ensure that any effects to listed salmon are fully mitigated.

⊗ **MYTH:** Local water supply projects are a better investment.

✔ **FACT:** Water solutions in California are not an “either/or” proposition—we need to protect the future reliability of the State Water Project and we need to support local projects to secure water supplies. Ignoring the effects of climate change on the State Water Project would risk water security for 27 million people.

⊗ **MYTH:** Tribes have been “left out” of the process

✔ **FACT:** DWR initially reached out to more than 120 Tribes and received responses from 13 interested in participating in the consultation process. This included more than 150 government-to-government consultations, numerous site visits and extensive Tribal review and comment on the consultation record. These efforts played an important role in identifying and evaluating potential impacts on Tribal cultural resources and helped DWR develop robust and responsive mitigation measures.

⊗ **MYTH:** All Californians would pay for the tunnel and it’s too expensive.

✔ **FACT:** The project would be funded only by public water agencies in the Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, and Southern California that receive water from the State Water Project, not through the state’s General Fund and not by state taxpayers. The State Water Project is one of the most affordable sources of water in California. A recent economic analysis shows that the State Water Project is highly valuable to the state economy. It also shows that the State Water Project is more affordable than desalination, recycling, stormwater capture and conservation.

⊗ **MYTH:** The earthquake risk in the Delta is overstated.

✔ **FACT:** According to the U.S. Geological Survey, there is a 72 percent chance of a 6.7 or greater magnitude earthquake in the Bay Area by 2043, and a major earthquake centered in the Delta poses a significant threat to levees. The collapse of Delta levees could allow salt water to contaminate the State Water Project delivery system. The Delta Conveyance Project would minimize this threat.

⊗ **MYTH:** The tunnel will “sit dry” and be unusable because climate change is reducing snowpack.

✔ **FACT:** The primary purpose of the Delta Conveyance Project is to adapt a major source of water supply for a future of reduced snowpack due to more precipitation falling as rain instead of snow and earlier runoff. Future precipitation patterns are expected to result in more rain flowing through rivers, and the Delta Conveyance Project will help capture and move high flows. The assertion that the project will “sit dry” is simply not supported by substantial evidence, including detailed hydrologic modeling, in our analyses.

⊗ **MYTH:** A recent court ruling bars DWR from building or financing the project.

✔ **FACT:** The judge has not said that DWR lacks the authority to build the project it approved in December or borrow money to pay for it. The project DWR approved in December 2023 was not before the court. What was before the court were bond resolutions that contained a broadly defined “Delta program,” and the judge essentially rejected the definition as being too broad. The bond resolutions were adopted in 2020 during the time that DWR was conducting environmental review and the department necessarily had to adopt a program definition that could encompass the broad range of project alternatives under consideration.

