



Legislation Text

File #: 13-0250, Version: 1

Adopt a resolution urging the State Resources Agency and the U.S. Department of Interior to expand the range of alternatives and extent and depth of analysis of these alternatives (including the Portfolio Alternative) in future drafts of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan and associated environmental documents

Published Notice Required? Yes _____ No X

Public Hearing Required? Yes _____ No X

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION:

The Department of Resource Management recommends that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt a resolution urging the State Resources Agency and the U.S. Department of Interior to expand the range of alternatives and extent and depth of analysis of these alternatives in future drafts of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan and associated environmental documents, including the Portfolio-Based Conceptual Alternative which has been developed by a coalition of environmental groups and water districts; and
2. Direct staff to draft a letter for the Chair's signature to transmit this resolution to appropriate State/Federal agencies and legislative members.

SUMMARY:

The State and Federal government have begun to release sections of the draft Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) for public review. Our understanding is that the Plan will contain one primary alternative (featuring a 9,000 cfs intake, twin tunnels and over 100,000 acres of habitat restoration) for full environmental analysis with several alternatives that will be evaluated at a lesser level. Recently, a coalition of environmental groups and water districts has brought forward a potential BDCP alternative known as the Portfolio Alternative. This concept features a smaller intake (3,000 cfs), more emphasis on development of south of Delta storage options, commitment to other local water supply solutions, increased levee investments, and less conversion of agricultural land to habitat (Attachment B outlines all components of the Portfolio Concept). The proponents of the BDCP has thus far declined to include this or similar alternatives in the BDCP analysis other than at a very cursory level.

To date, three (Yolo, Sacramento and Contra Costa) of the five Delta counties have gone on record in support of broadening alternatives in the BDCP including the Portfolio Concept as has the Delta Counties Coalition (DCC). San Joaquin plans to do so in the very near future. Staff believes Solano County should also advocate for further study of the Portfolio or similar alternatives, as it appears, at least based on information we have received thus far, that such alternatives would have less impact on Solano County, particularly with respect to conversion of agricultural lands. In addition, approaches like the Portfolio Concept appear to have promise as a more comprehensive approach to dealing with the State's complex and challenging long-term water supply issues and actually has greater consistency with the 2009 Water Legislative package.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There are no fiscal impacts associated with action on the proposed resolution. State time devoted to Delta issues is supported by the Board's Delta Water budget.

DISCUSSION:

The BDCP is now entering a more public phase. There has been much speculation on potential impacts; it is hoped information that will be released in the coming months will provide greater clarity on those impacts as well as possible benefits of the Plan. Regrettably, despite requests from numerous interests, including those in the Delta, to take a comprehensive look at alternatives that would be less impactful on the Delta and perhaps have more sustainable long-term water supply benefits, the BDCP process has moved forward with a focus on one primary alternative that involves twin tunnels and a 9,000 cfs intake facility. This alternative also proposes conversion of over 100,000 acres of prime farmland in the Delta, including significant swaths in eastern Solano County (Cache Slough) and in the Suisun Marsh. This will clearly have a potentially significant effect on the County in terms of land use and economic impacts.

As the BDCP has evolved, Solano County has not taken an official position in support or opposition to the project. To date, the Board's position has been to assess potential impacts to the County; continue to attempt to have a dialogue with project proponents; negotiate to minimize impacts if not strive for positive consequences to the County, with a formal decision to support or oppose the BDCP dependent on results of studies and analysis on the projects consequences. Board support for the attached resolution is consistent with the County's above described current strategies in dealing with the BDCP in that it simply calls for a more comprehensive evaluation of different types of alternatives. A greater understanding of alternatives would facilitate better informed public policy choices which will be critical given the magnitude of the BDCP and its potential consequences. It certainly behooves the County to advocate for alternatives that may reduce impacts on our region and ironically, may actually result in a more effective long-term statewide water supply solution at less cost.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Board may choose not to approve this proposed resolution. Such a decision is not recommended as the resolution simply asks for broader study of BDCP alternatives, a position which has also been supported by other counties and the DCC.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The County continues to work closely with the DCC in advocating for consideration of BDCP alternatives that have less impact on the Delta.

CAO RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION