OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

February 18, 2025

State Water Resources Control Board and
Administrative Hearings Office
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95814-0100

RE: Delta Conveyance Project Hearing

Dear Chairman Esquivel; Board members D'Adamo, Firestone, Maguire, and Morgan; and Administrative Hearing Officer Kuenzi,

As you begin to weigh the petition to amend water rights permits to accommodate the proposed Delta Conveyance Project, I thank you for the opportunity to explain why those proposed changes would be in the public interest.

I and my two immediate predecessors as Governor have all committed to modernizing the 60-year-old State Water Project because California's prosperity depends upon it. More than any other system of infrastructure, the State Water Project has allowed California to absorb millions of new residents and become an economic powerhouse. The local water agencies that pay for the State Water Project are diversifying their water sources and getting increasingly efficient, but they cannot fully replace foundational State Water Project deliveries that supply nearly half the water people use in the South Bay, Central Coast, San Joaquin Valley, and Southern California. Some water districts in those regions depend entirely on State Water Project supplies. The livelihoods of most Californians are tied to State Water Project supplies; if the State Water Project's service area were its own nation, it would amount to the eighth largest economy in the world.

Our future is hotter. Thirsty plants, drier soils, and a warmer atmosphere will consume more of the rain and snow that fall on California. Climate scientists tell us there will be fewer years wet enough to overcome that heat and dryness. As a result, average annual deliveries from the State Water Project will decline. The future will bring fewer days of precipitation -- but climate projections also indicate an increase in the intensity of the largest storms. We must adapt. New infrastructure could ameliorate the decline in State Water Project supplies by capturing excess flow from big but infrequent storms.

That is one of the many key benefits of the Delta Conveyance Project: It would increase the opportunities to save storm runoff for drier times.

Just as importantly, the Delta Conveyance Project would protect State Water Project supplies in the event multiple Delta islands were breached by earthquake, flood, sea-level rise, or a combination of those forces. Trouble of this kind seems increasingly likely. This past fall, persistent seepage triggered emergency repairs on Victoria Island in the central Delta, and in December, relatively routine storms caused overtopping, erosion, and breaches on Grizzly, Van Sickle, and Sherman islands. While we work with local reclamation districts to strengthen Delta levees, we also must be prepared to maintain water supplies in the event of catastrophe.

Decades ago, a separate, north-to-south conveyance system was envisioned as part of the original State Water Project. The idea persists because the need persists. In the last 40 years, at least four separate proposals have been thoroughly studied. Each iteration has shrunk in terms of the amount of water it could convey from the Sacramento River. The first such conveyance structure would have carried nearly 22,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). Later proposals involved intakes capable of diverting 15,000 cfs and 9,000 cfs. The proposal before you features two intakes, a single underground tunnel, and the capacity to move a maximum of 6,000 cfs.

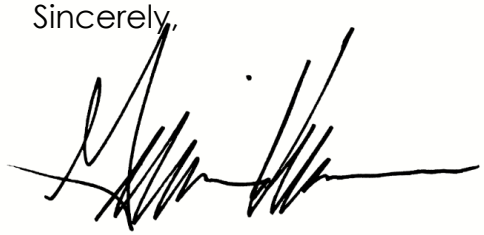
When I directed the Department of Water Resources six years ago to study a smaller Delta conveyance project with one tunnel, not two, DWR took the opportunity to work more closely than ever with communities and Tribes and deploy design innovations. As a result, the proposed project has a shrunken footprint and avoids or minimizes effects of noise, air quality, traffic, power, aesthetics, boating, and land use, among others. For example, DWR reduced the number of tunnel shafts, eliminated the need for a forebay by connecting directly to the California Aqueduct, selected a route that avoids the heart of the Delta, buried power lines to avoid impacts to migratory birds, and configured the design to avoid barge landings. The project would work in concert with

existing south Delta facilities, be operated to meet all regulatory water quality and fishery requirements, and would not change operations of upstream reservoirs.

The proposal before you has been thoughtfully refined to protect the environment, fisheries, ecosystems, water quality and water supply. We share the task of balancing public trust resources and the many beneficial uses of water. I have considered the Delta Conveyance Project carefully and am convinced that the reach of the State Water Project and the essential nature of water make it the most important climate adaptation project we can undertake for future Californians. I urge you to weigh this compelling public interest carefully when considering DWR's petitions.

Thank you for your work to consider DWR's petitions.

Sincerely,



Gavin Newsom
Governor of California