



PO Box 3156, Fremont, CA 94539
(510) 770 9764 www.cacoastkeeper.org

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Proposed \$11 Billion Water Bond Will Not Solve California's Water Challenges

California Coastkeeper Alliance (CCKA) and its 12 member Waterkeeper organizations advocate for clean, abundant water flows from the Oregon border to San Diego. The California Waterkeepers work daily to address California's water problems using science, law and policy tools. Based on our extensive expertise with waterway health, and with local and state water needs, we do not believe that the \$11.14 billion water bond package slated for the November 2010 ballot will effectively address the water challenges facing California. Accordingly, CCKA and member Waterkeepers formally oppose the proposed water bond, for the following reasons, among others:

The Bond Fails to Address Evolving Threats to our Dwindling Water Supply. Building new reservoirs and damming rivers will not effectively address projected decreases of our traditional water supplies from climate change impacts, water pollution, and other threats. A more immediate and cost-effective strategy is for California to focus on better managing and diversifying its water supply portfolio by pursuing conservation, stormwater recharge/reuse, water recycling, tiered water rates, groundwater protection, coordinated management of groundwater and surface water, and improved controls on water pollution.

California Has Billions of Unspent Bond Dollars for Water Projects. California already has billions in unspent money from past bond measures for water and waterway projects. Focused attention should be paid to appropriate expenditure and assessment of existing bond funds before additional debt is taken on.

Building New Dams is Environmentally Destructive and Fiscally Irresponsible. The bond would allow more than \$3 billion to be appropriated for dams and related projects without legislative oversight. The well-studied impacts to fish and wildlife from numerous dams throughout the state have led state agencies to rethink and begin to remove many existing dams. Key impacts are illustrated at <http://www.cacoastkeeper.org/programs/mapping-initiative/fish-barriers>.

We Can't Afford It. The estimated debt service of the proposed \$11.14 billion bond is \$800 million in precious General Fund dollars every year for the next 30 years. California has a projected budget shortfall of over \$20 billion already for the coming year, and drastic cuts have already been made to critical state programs and services. An additional \$800 million every year will have to come from even deeper cuts, which must be considered before taking on this significant expense.

It Is the Wrong Type of Bond. The proposed bond is a *general obligation bond*, which means that the general taxpayers are responsible for paying it off. By contrast, the State Water Project was appropriately a *revenue bond*, paid for by the beneficiaries of the projects built with the bond funds. State general obligation bonds should not be used for water systems that primarily benefit a minority of state entities. If the projects do not pencil out as a revenue bond, then they are economically unwise and should not be subsidized with taxpayer dollars.

California simply cannot afford a misplaced investment right now, particularly in an area as fundamental to our collective health and well-being as water. The proposed bond will not deliver the clean, reliable water that the people and natural environment of California need. As a result, we must formally oppose the "Safe, Clean, and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act of 2010."