



FRIENDS
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RIVER

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Friends of the River Urges Legislature To Reject Combined Delta Water Package And Water Bond

Friends of the River urges the California Legislature to reject a last minute rush to pass a combined Delta water policy and water bond package before the scheduled recess on Friday, September 11.

It's likely that whatever will be voted on in the next 24 hours will not even be available in print for review by either individual Legislators or the public. This is no way to conduct the public's business. A similarly rushed and flawed process resulted in the passage of complex energy deregulation legislation in 1996 that nearly bankrupted the state and caused energy brown-outs nine years ago.

Attaching a \$12.4 billion water bond to the package will cost taxpayers \$800 million a year for 30 years. This bond could spend more than \$6 billion on new dams that will not alleviate our drought problems. With public safety, health, education, and environmental protection budgets cut to the bone, California simply cannot afford to subsidize the most costly and least effective water options available.

The Delta policy package still focuses on achieving so called "coequal" but clearly competing and likely incompatible water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration goals. CALFED tried a similar approach and failed miserably. We should learn from that mistake.

The Delta policy package creates the Delta Stewardship Council to manage the Delta, the majority of whom will be appointed by the Governor. The Council will decide on the whether to build a Peripheral Canal and how big the canal should be. Since the Governor already supports the largest canal possible, it's likely that the Council will approve a canal as long and as wide as the Panama Canal, capable of sucking the Delta dry. In addition, the Council fails to include adequate representation of Delta interests. Regardless of how important the Delta may be to the rest of the state, we cannot exploit the Delta's natural resources as if it were a third world colony.

There is no need to rush to a vote by Sept. 11. Nothing in this legislative package will provide drought relief in the next few months or even the next several years. Friends of the River urges the Legislature to use the rest of the two year session to deliberate thoughtfully on this complex subject and produce a product that benefits all Californians and truly protects and restores the Delta.

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