

# OPINION

THE SACRAMENTO BEE

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## ANOTHER VIEW

# Dams are not the answer to water woes

BY KATHRYN PHILLIPS  
*Special to The Bee*

The Bee's editorial praising bipartisanship on the updated water bond ("A rare sighting of bipartisanship – on water no less," Aug. 15) rightly saluted state Sen. Lois Wolk for her good work in trying to keep bond funds away from the ill-conceived Delta tunnels. But the piece got it wrong when it implied that the Delta tunnels issue was the only part of the bond that created concerns for Sierra Club and other environmental groups.

The new bond, like the one it replaced, is written to enable extraordinarily expensive dams that will provide negligible benefit to the public, won't resolve our water supply problems and will irreparably damage the environment. It was written this way because the Legis-

lature's Republicans and San Joaquin Valley Democrats threatened to withhold votes needed to get the bond bill passed unless they got money for the dams.

Sierra Club was founded by John Muir in 1892. Muir formed the organization to advocate for the preservation of the natural treasures that dot our great nation. He fought hard against the damming of one of California's most breathtaking wild areas – Hetch Hetchy Valley – which was drowned by water bound for San Francisco's urban dwellers in 1923.

Since that time, Sierra Club has stood for a common-sense approach to resource management that respects and works in concert with nature's majesty, not against it.

We recognize that the final bond package has many positive elements for Californians and our

state's natural areas. But spending \$2.7 billion – more than one-third – of the \$7.5 billion bond funds on an old-school, unsustainable approach to water management just doesn't make sense.

The world is much different today than during the dam-building heyday in the 20th century. Climate disruption has begun and precipitation patterns are already changing. New dams won't respond to that. The sooner the special interests that drive dam development in this state recognize this 21st-century reality and focus instead on moving aggressively to enable regional resiliency through conservation, efficiency, recycling, stormwater capture, groundwater management and the like, the better off we will all be.

*Kathryn Phillips is director of Sierra Club California.*