



April 17, 2023

Honorable Ben Allen, Chair
Senate Environmental Quality Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 3230
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 687 (Eggman) – OPPOSE

Dear Senator Allen:

The undersigned organizations must respectfully oppose SB 687 (Eggman), as amended on April 12, 2023, which would impose a series of conditions related to adoption and implementation of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan (WQCP) to delay advancement of the Delta Conveyance Project. SB 687 is scheduled to be considered in your Committee on April 26, 2023.

Our organizations collectively support the completion of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan Update. In fact, many of our organizations, in partnership with the Newsom Administration and water users throughout the State, have been strong proponents for advancement of the development of a watershed-wide approach to flows, ecosystem restoration, and water supply reliability through the Voluntary Agreements (VAs). If approved by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), the VAs, and the related suite of investments to improve fish and wildlife habitat conditions, significant volumes of water for environmental flows, and development of science-based governance and adaptive management models, would essentially become the new Bay-Delta WQCP and will be implemented through binding agreements between the SWRCB, the Department of Water Resources, and participating water agencies to direct water, funding, and habitat restoration efforts. The VAs

are a process that is under way and that can make immediate demonstrable and meaningful improvements through a collaborative and transformational approach to healthy rivers, farms, and communities. We support the timely adoption and implementation of the WQCP.

That being said, we are also concerned that SB 687 is intended to effectively terminate progress on the Delta Conveyance Project. We believe that it is inappropriate to “hold hostage” the Delta Conveyance Project – or any single project, series of projects, or water rights permits, for that matter – through the adoption and “full implementation” of the WQCP.

The real-time impacts from climate change that are now clearly our reality– from multi-year, prolonged drought conditions in Fall 2022 to extreme atmospheric river events and the second largest snowpack in California’s recorded history as of today – demand that water infrastructure investments that allow us to capture and store water when it is wet continue to proceed without unnecessary and unwarranted delays and deferral of action. In a recent survey of California voters, **68 percent** of voters indicated that the condition of California’s water supply infrastructure is an extremely or very serious problem¹. SB 687 would exacerbate this issue by arbitrarily deferring a critical water infrastructure investment that is necessary to help California respond to climate adaptation – exactly the type of outcome on which California voters are increasingly expressing dissatisfaction and frustration.

The Governor’s Water Supply Strategy issued in August 2022 continues to emphasize the long-held policy position and direction of the Newsom Administration regarding the need to modernize the State Water Project conveyance in the Delta. Our existing system and aging infrastructure is not equipped to handle the climate whiplash that we are facing. The Delta Conveyance Project would help capture and move runoff from big storms – like we experienced over the past three months – for water supply reliability purposes, and still meet fishery and water quality protections. As a state, we need to collectively “walk and chew gum at the same time.” There is no rationale for holding progress on the Delta Conveyance Project hostage unless and until the WQCP is adopted and fully implemented. Both of these processes can advance simultaneously without creating undue conflict or challenges for California water management. SB 687 is merely a tactic for effectively terminating progress on this important climate adaptation project.

For these reasons, we must oppose SB 687.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Pierre
State Water Contractors

Gail Delihant
Western Growers

Brenda Bass
California Chamber of Commerce

Robert Spiegel
California Manufacturers & Technology Association

¹ Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates – February 2023

Senator Ben Allen
April 17, 2023
Page 3

Charles Wilson
Southern California Water Coalition

Cindy Tuck
Association of California Water Agencies

P. Anthony Thomas
California Building Industry Association

Alexandra Biering
California Farm Bureau

cc: Senator Susan Eggman
Members, Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee
Scott Seekatz, Republican Caucus