

Steinberg says water bond delay is likely

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Photo of Steinberg courtesy of Steinberg's Office.



steinberg.jpg

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by Dan Bacher

Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg said Thursday that a delay in the \$11.14 billion water bond until 2014 is likely, though no definitive decision has been made yet on postponing the measure.

Near the end of Steinberg's press availability on March 22, he said it was a "likelihood" that the water bond would be delayed after he was asked by a reporter if there was any update on the water bond status.

"The stakeholders are still meeting with one another," said Steinberg. "There's some public opinion research that's been ongoing, but no, I don't have any update. I think in all likelihood the water bond will be put off 'til 2014, that's what I think."

"It's not ... I think we want to leave a 2012 option open, but everything is focused on passing a revenue measure, that's the number one priority on the November ballot," said Steinberg.

Steinberg had said a few weeks ago that the stakeholders would be meeting and trying to figure out potential compromises to pare down the dollar amount or determining if it was best to delay the bond until November 2014.

Delta advocates said the bond should go before the voters in November 2012 as planned so the people of California can overwhelmingly reject it like they did the peripheral canal in 1982.

"The water bond was a bad idea in 2009 when the Legislature created it, it was a bad idea when they pulled it from the ballot in 2010 and it's still a bad idea in 2012," said Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, Executive Director of Restore the Delta. "And it will still be a bad idea in 2014 because the bond was badly written."

"California voters deserve the right to vote on the bond this year and to speak their mind against it once and for all," she emphasized.

“Delaying it will not make it better because the bond supports boondoggle projects and does not address California water needs.”

While the water bond does not specifically fund the construction of the peripheral canal, it provides support for boondoggle projects like the canal. It is estimated that approximately \$4.5 billion of the bond supports the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) to build the peripheral canal, according to Barrigan-Parrilla.

Delta advocates oppose the peripheral canal because it is designed to facilitate the export of more Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta water to Southern California and corporate agribusiness. Since healthy fish populations depend on substantial freshwater flows through the Delta, canal opponents believe the facility’s construction will lead to the extinction of imperiled Central Valley steelhead, Sacramento River chinook salmon, Delta smelt, longfin smelt, green sturgeon, Sacramento splittail, striped bass and other species.

The fast-tracking of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan by the Brown and Obama administrations is opposed by a broad coalition of Delta residents, recreational and commercial fishermen, family farmers, Indian Tribes, consumer advocates, grassroots environmentalists, business owners and elected officials.

Ironically, Steinberg made his comments on International World Water Day. The day is commemorated annually as a means of focusing attention on the importance of freshwater and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.

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