Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 16, 2012

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Rebecca Blank
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

The Honorable John Laird
Secretary
California Natural Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Salazar, Acting Secretary Blank, and Secretary Laird:

As the letters you are receiving from a wide variety of public officials and stakeholders reveal, there is strong support for your efforts to complete the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP). This letter adds our voices to that chorus, but also makes a finer point. As others have stated, the BDCP must follow the best available science and the highest standard of public involvement. We are confident that under your leadership, the BDCP will meet those standards. But, we believe an equally important point is that the BDCP must do more than comply with the relevant state and federal statutes; it must also make business sense in a way that balances the Delta's value as a water supply for millions of Californians with its status as a unique ecosystem.

The BDCP will not be implemented unless it finds the balance point where improved water supply co-exists with environmental restoration. We encourage you to actively manage your respective staffs to reach that balance point. Too often state or federal agencies with limited missions lose the ability to "step back" and see the broader picture. As leaders and policymakers, it is your responsibility to see that the larger goals of California's water supply and the Delta's ecosystem are balanced. Please do not expect your technical staffs to accomplish that without your active leadership. As public officials with decades of experience, it is clear to us that the broader balancing required to finish the public draft of the BDCP falls on your offices.

If the costs of the project are too high or the water supply available from it is too low, or if the environmental actions are insufficient, then we have failed to find that right balance point. To be viable, the BDCP will need to provide enough water supply and regulatory assurance to attract the necessary financial investment, and it will need to provide enough environmental protection and restoration to allow the regulatory agencies to issue the necessary permits. These are not decisions that can be made by your technical staffs. They can only be made by you, using the knowledge you have acquired from careers of managing and balancing the sometimes competing scientific information your staff provides with larger state and federal objectives.

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We all have heard comments from many stakeholders about delaying or ending the BDCP. We do not believe that either is the right approach. If the BDCP stalls or fails, we will return to a world of extended litigation and the associated Delta dysfunction that results when every stakeholder wins a few and loses a few. Only the fish lose them all.

As the BDCP nears a decision point for many, including your agencies, we encourage you to recognize the choice presented to you. Following the recommendations from well-meaning staff members at agencies with limited missions will not add up to a workable plan. Showing leadership, by taking the input and crafting a plan that balances the water supply and Delta restoration goals, will create a plan that can succeed by achieving the broader interests of California and the nation.

We sincerely appreciate the dedication and effort you have put into the BDCP. If we are successful California and the nation will be better served in the decades to come by the balance you strike. If we can be helpful to your efforts in any way please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

DENNIS CARDOZA
Member of Congress