

Talk of 'secret' tunnel fuels heated water debate in California

By Central Valley Business Times

A 45-mile long tunnel that would drain fresh water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta – so wide in diameter that small planes could fly through it – is being talked about in secret meetings in Sacramento.

Broad plans for the tunnel have been worked out, although the planning document prepared by the state's Natural Resources Agency with the plans says that it is "presented only for purposes of facilitating discussion and is not intended as any preliminary or final decision...."

"These are government officials using taxpayer funds to try to develop a scheme for spending billions more taxpayer funds and they are doing it in a non-public way," says Jonas Minton, water policy advisor for the Planning and Conservation League, a Sacramento-based nonprofit lobbying organization specializing in environmental issues, and a former deputy director of the California Department of Water Resources.

"It includes many, many specifics that are in the form of a proposal. And perhaps this was a slip-up, but in the first appendix included with the document ... it's actually entitled 'state proposal.'" says Mr. Minton. "Although they're saying that this is just an issue paper, it certainly comes across as more than that."

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