

Calif. tries to find a balance with water needs

By Karen Weise, Bloomberg

A century after William Mulholland's Los Angeles aqueduct first began watering the Southland, the water wars in California show no sign of abating.

The state reached a milestone on Monday in its effort to balance equal-but-conflicting goals: channeling more water to dry farmland and cities while restoring the natural habitat already hurt by the state's thirst.

California has released details of a \$25 billion plan to run two tunnels under the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The tunnels would divert water from supplies north of the delta to existing pumps on its southern edge that push water to Southern California and the agricultural land of the Central Valley.

By forcing the water underground for 35 miles, the plan also calls for the restoration of more than 80,000 acres of habitat in the delta, which houses 56 species of plants, fish, and wildlife that have been struggling. The area's current system of fragile earthen levees are vulnerable to a nightmare scenario known as "California's Katrina."

The state's twin reports explaining the conservation proposal and the impact of the water project span some 34,000 pages; the "highlights" brochures alone total more than 170 pages. The reports look at 14 alternatives but focus on the one favored by Gov. Jerry Brown.

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