

AB 1585 (Alejo):

Funding for the Interlake Tunnel Project

As Amended in Assembly, April 4, 2016

Last updated: April 5, 2016

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

Under existing law, the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) is authorized to award a design-build project for an Interlake Tunnel to connect Lake San Antonio with Lake Nacimiento.

AB 1585 would allocate \$25 million to MCWRA for the Interlake Tunnel project.

PROBLEM & NEED FOR THE BILL

In the midst of the worst drought California has ever experienced, increasing water capture capacity in the Salinas Valley watershed is important regionally and statewide. Any water not captured through the reservoirs at Lake San Antonio and Lake Nacimiento (in Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties) simply floods nearby areas.

Much of the flood damage caused by the El Niño events of 1995 and 1998 were in the most economically disadvantaged parts of the Salinas Valley. This means that the very people who are least able to prepare for flooding are hit hardest.

In addition, the inability to maximize water capture that could have contributed to agriculture results in lost jobs for the Salinas Valley. In Monterey County alone, the agriculture industry accounts for 76,000 jobs and \$5.7 billion of economic activity. Indeed, the agriculture industry produces \$1 million per hour in Monterey County.

Both San Antonio and Nacimiento are used by MCWRA as reservoirs. However, Nacimiento can reach full capacity three times faster than San Antonio. Any extra water that Nacimiento receives simply floods into nearby areas.

AB 155 (Alejo, 2014) provided MCWRA with authorization to commence an eight-mile-long Interlake Tunnel that connects Lake San Antonio and Lake

Nacimiento in Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties.

An Interlake Tunnel would allow for excess water from Nacimiento to flow to San Antonio in order to maximize the capture of water in the Salinas Valley watershed. It would also include modifications to increase the water storage capacity at San Antonio. The additional available water would help protect the jobs provided by the agricultural industry in the Salinas Valley.

By maximizing water capture capacity at Nacimiento and San Antonio, the Interlake Tunnel would also increase water quality by 1) reducing the amount of water that returns to the water basin from flooding of agricultural fields, and 2) reducing the intrusion of seawater. As a result, not only will drinking water for the people of the Salinas Valley be cleaner. It will decrease the annual damage done to the region's agriculture industry.

The Interlake Tunnel would also reduce potential flood damage in the region. The Tunnel would reduce flood spillage by 11,857 acre-feet per year on average. This not only means more water stored, but more lives saved.

WHAT THIS BILL WOULD DO

AB 1585 would allocate \$25 million to MCWRA to be used for the Interlake Tunnel Project.

BILL STATUS

Scheduled for a hearing in the Assembly
Committee on Water, Parks, & Wildlife for
April 12, 2016