



WESTERN WATER

Dems seek probe of funding for Calif. tunnel project

Jeremy P. Jacobs, E&E News reporter

Published: Wednesday, October 25, 2017

The top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee yesterday called for a federal investigation into alleged misuse of taxpayer funds in planning California Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown's massive twin tunnels water project.

Arizona Rep. Raúl Grijalva, along with five California Democrats, asked the Government Accountability Office to issue a legal opinion on a recent Interior Department inspector general report concluding the misuse of at least \$50 million.

The IG report found that the Bureau of Reclamation used funds that should have come from water contractors that would benefit from Brown's WaterFix, the \$15 billion proposal to construct twin tunnels under the environmentally sensitive Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta in order to protect the state's complex water infrastructure.

"We found that [the bureau] did not disclose the full cost of its participation in the [Bay Delta Conservation Plan], subsidized [Central Valley Project] water contractors, and converted \$50 million in federal funds from reimbursable to nonreimbursable without documentation," the inspector general report found ([Greenwire](#), Sept. 8).

In addition to Grijalva, California Democrats Jared Huffman, Mike Thompson, Jerry McNerney, Mark DeSaulnier and Anna Eshoo signed the letter.

Brown's plans for the tunnels — the most controversial water infrastructure project in the country — have suffered several setbacks in recent weeks. Multiple potential funders for the undertaking, including the influential Westlands Water District, have opted against participating.

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the largest wholesale water provider in the state, has voted to back the project, leading some to speculate that a smaller plan could move forward ([Greenwire](#), Oct. 19).
