



Brien Brennan
Elder Creek Oak Woodland Preserve
7200 South Fork Drive
Red Bluff, CA 96080
February 17, 2017

Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814-0100

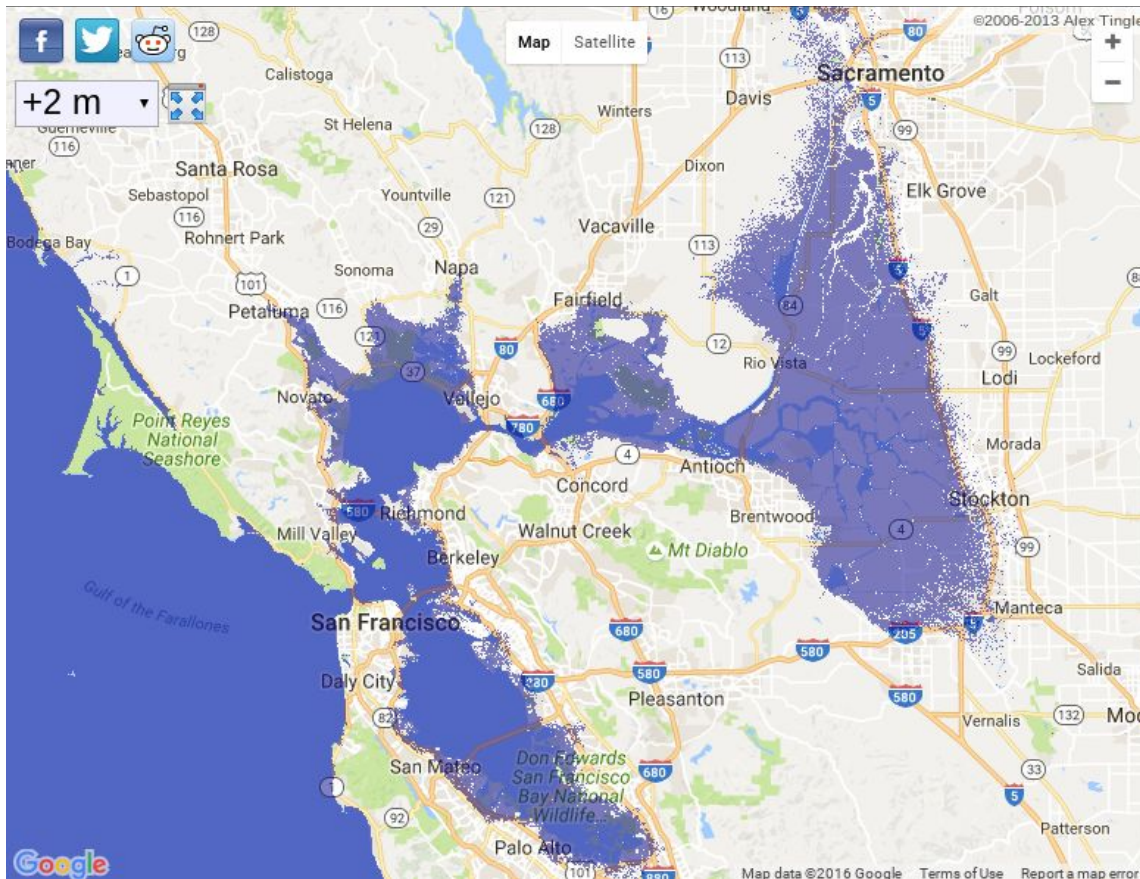
Dear SWRCB representatives,

I am writing today to voice my concerns about the direction management of California's water has been going ever since Euro-Americans seized control of the bioregion in the 1800's, and which is perhaps best represented by the past and present policies with regards to the Bay Delta.

I apologize if any of what I'm about to name is redundant for any of you, but given that the tenets of this capitalist culture are rarely, if ever, questioned in public by public officials, I want to lay out the framework from which I speak.

- 1) The dominant belief system of modern humans has been human-centered for at least 10,000 years, when large-scale cultivation of soil began.
- 2) Unlike other animals, our ability to cooperate in very large numbers towards ends that undermine ecological integrity gives us vast powers that operate at timescales outside the norm of many natural evolutionary processes.
- 3) These powers have further fortified our anthropocentrism and lead to a vast and unsustainable human population to the severe detriment and depopulation of most other species on the planet, while structurally requiring a life of poverty and/or misery for many of our own species.
- 4) This culture will not voluntarily transform into a sustainable one due to the inertia of cultural norms and beliefs.
- 5) As all unsustainable civilizations before, this one will come to an end, because no matter how hard we try, we cannot escape physical reality. This planet is finite and cannot sustain infinite growth of a system that undermines most of the natural checks and balances that evolved over millions of years.
- 6) Industrial civilization will only come to an end with global ecological collapse, which will happen due to biological impoverishment and/or global warming, as we are seeing unfold at an ever-increasing rate.

- 7) Two meters of sea rise is very likely in the next 80 years. And it may happen sooner. Two meters of sea rise looks like this:



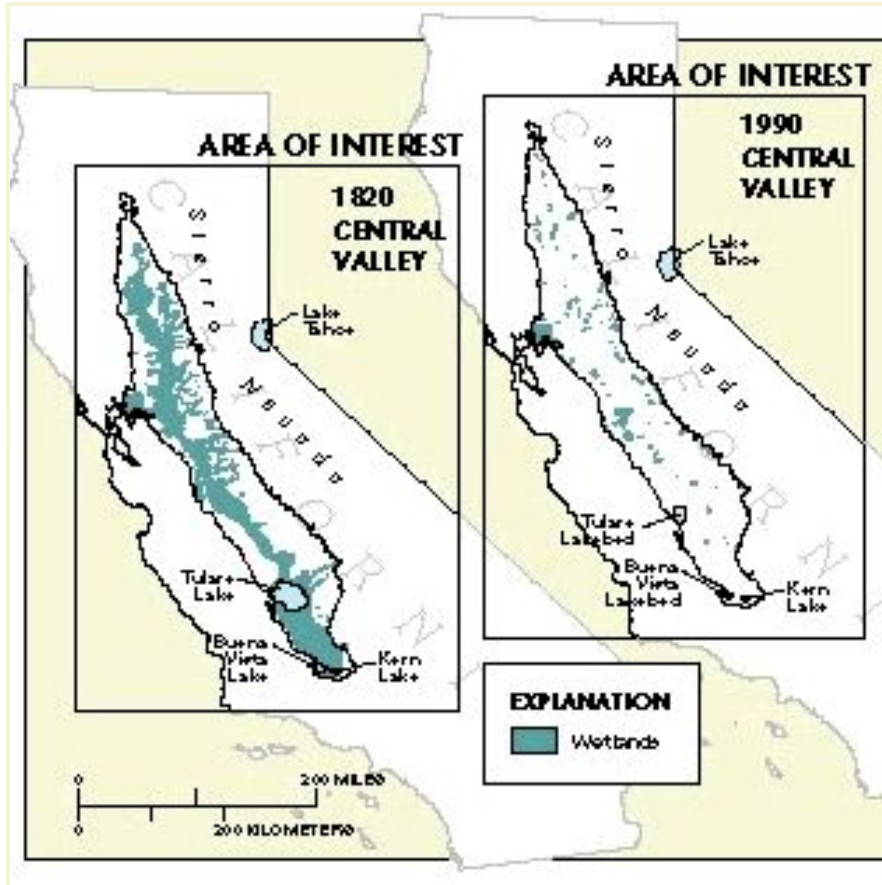
- 8) The natural state for Earth at CO₂ levels of those today is a sea level that is at least 20m (~70') higher, so it seems *highly* likely that we are already locked into some—if not all—of that. *By when, and how much*, we don't know.
- 9) This means the Bay Delta, this century, will be at least two meters deeper and primarily salt water and a mix of all the chemicals humans fail to remove from the present-day surrounding lands.
- 10) Adding massive-scale infrastructure to this area, with this knowledge, is literally a massive waste of time and money and lives—millions if not billions of them.
- 11) A forward-thinking culture would begin making plans to relocate millions of humans, reinvent land ownership and use, and look to the natural world for the solutions, as that is what evolution and the so-called Earth Systems are constantly trying to do—find a new balance.

What is the natural world that is now called the Central Valley and Bay Delta trying to do? For a clue, we can look to what existed before “management of resources” took over.

One hundred and seventy years ago, California's Central Valley was endowed with a natural environment the scope and magnitude of which it is difficult, if not impossible, to fully comprehend today. According to various accounts, the Sacramento Valley had approximately 800,000 acres of riparian forest remaining after 1848 and it is conservatively estimated that the southern half of the great Valley had an additional 121,000 acres.

As of 1983, there were 49,000 acres in a disturbed and/or degraded condition and 53,000 acres, for which no report of condition was named. But surely the majority of this mature riparian forest had been or is currently being heavily impacted by human activities. Even if there are still 50,000 moderately intact acres, which is highly unlikely, we'd be at 5.4% of what existed just 170 years ago. And that 5% is fragmented, polluted, and absent some keystone species—and some is still under threat of “conversion.” Given the trajectory of *Homo sapiens*, there is no way to restore these magnificent forests, ***but if left alone, they would begin the slow process of restoring themselves.***

As for the sad state of interior CA's waterways and the Delta, this low rez image should say it all.



Riparian, aquatic, wetland and floodplain habitats totalled about 4.7 million of the Central Valley's 13 million acres before 1900. As of 1995, these habitats had been reduced to just over half a million acres, less than 11% of their former territory. Irrigation agriculture, everywhere it has been used extensively, with very very few exceptions—and CA is surely not one—leads to desertification. It is the enemy of biodiversity, biological integrity, evolution and sustainable human cultures. We are on the same path (though faster due to modern technologies and global markets) that led to the deserts in present day Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan and other places, all of which had both forests and woodlands before agriculture took hold. This is the legacy of economically-driven irrigation agriculture. Re-using water, using drip emitters, watering only at night, and so on cannot overcome the larger degradation inherent in this approach to feeding humans. It is a lose-lose scenario, played out over and over across the globe.

How about California breaks the pattern and decides to phase-out irrigation agriculture that requires ruining fisheries and hyper-exploiting groundwater? Here's an idea on how to phase-in such sanity. It starts with standing up to Jerry Brown's Delta Tunnels plan.

If you've bothered to read this far, you may be wondering why I'd even care about the Delta, given its fate as a deeper inland sea. Because when someone, or somewhere, you love is dying, you don't just abandon them. You help them be who they want to be as they make the great transition. Don't you agree?

Here is what my love and knowledge want to ask of you at this crossroads for life in California, with regards to the life that *is* the Delta:

- 1) A permanent reduction of water exports that transitions into zero exports. The San Joaquin River must reach Chipps Island in order to restore, protect, and preserve the entire estuary. If unsustainable water exports are not dealt with, it is highly likely that water quality and quantity objectives for the Delta will *never* be met.
- 2) I do not want to see a weakening of salinity standards in the South Delta. Water quality standards must be protected for drinking water, municipal discharge, fisheries, and groundwater recharge, and to reduce the future risk of increased harmful algal blooms that are toxic to humans, dogs, fish, and other wildlife in south Delta channels.
- 3) The State Water Board must consider environmental justice communities in terms of drinking water and domestic use. Phase 1 Recirculated Draft SED fails to consider environmental justice communities in chapters 5 and 9 (hydrology/water quality and groundwater).
- 4) Water flows on the San Joaquin River must be adequate to restore and protect fisheries—and to protect the public trust value of the Bay-Delta estuary. A 40% restoration of flows will not accomplish this end. Science tells us that we need at least 60% of flows restored on the San Joaquin River for the health of the Bay-Delta. Of course, health, as measured by baselines that ignore the kind of truths I've put forward above, is a far cry from ecological integrity. For that, we need 100% of flows going into the Delta.

May the wisdom of these recommendations be realized. Thank you.