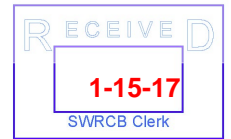


**From:** Cindy Charles  
**To:** [commentletters](#)  
**Subject:** Comment Letter - 2016 Bay Delta Plan Amendment & SED  
**Date:** Sunday, January 15, 2017 6:55:26 PM



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To: California State Resources Control Board

My name is Cindy Charles and I am the Conservation Chairperson of the Golden West Women Flyfishers for the last 16 years and a former Conservation Chair for the California Federation of Flyfishers.

I am writing to support the proposal by the State Water Board to increase the flows on the Tuolumne, Merced and Stanislaus Rivers. This is our last best chance to attempt to restore the severely degraded tributaries of the San Joaquin.

I have heard the emotional comments of the agricultural water users stating how the proposed new flow regime poses a threat to their life and livelihood. I too have an emotional connection to these rivers. The current irrigation diversion levels have clearly been a major factor in the reductions of fish population numbers. The concept of a more balanced use of the water in these three watersheds should not be considered a radical step, but a long overdue re-balancing of a public resource to a broader beneficial use.

I grew up in San Francisco drinking Tuolumne River water and learned to fish for salmon on fishing trips with my father. These life-changing outings were the reason for my degree in Zoology from UC Berkeley. For the last 20 years I have worked in banking and finance. I understand both the science and the complex economics of water. Climate change, population growth and the switch to permanent crops have placed increased demands on water resources.

The Tuolumne, Merced and Stanislaus Rivers have been always my favorite rivers. My now-adult son's first fishing trip was on the Tuolumne. Some of the salmon I caught with my father began their life in the spawning gravels of these 3 rivers. It is not only family farms that have a connection to these rivers. My family has a multi-generation connection too. My father, the avid salmon fisherman, would be greatly saddened by the current state of this formerly great resource. Fishing and healthy, abundant salmon are a part of my family's life and history. I fear a future without salmon to share with my grandchildren. It is not just farming families but fishing families that have their lives connected to these rivers.

I have fished the lower sections of the San Joaquin tributaries for 25 years. I have been witness to the diminished quality of the aquatic resources and seen habitat degraded over many seasons and many water year types. This rapid decline of these once great trout, steelhead and salmon fisheries has occurred in all 3 tributaries.

Three years after higher flow years, salmon return numbers show a large increase. These differences can be dramatic as in 1985 when 40,000 salmon returned to the Tuolumne. In the fall of 2016, the returns were sadly greatly diminished. In 2015 water temperatures in the Merced were so warm that the few remaining trout were rescued and held in a special refrigerated tank. During this same year urban Californians were subject to the historic water conservation requirements. However, in 2015 San Joaquin valley farms set agricultural revenue records. The fish paid the price for those profits, the urban users also paid those costs by decreasing water usage as much as 40%. During the prolonged drought Central Valley agriculture has expanded permanent crops, specifically tree nuts, dramatically.

The numbers of people seeking recreation in natural areas is increasing annually, as is the economic importance of those visitors. The citizens of California, the same people who sacrifice their water during periods of drought, deserve a chance to recreate on healthy, environmentally functioning rivers. Rebalancing the beneficial uses of these rivers is overdue. Do Californians deserve to live in a place that is so degraded that salmon are just a memory? No, they don't. Let's not trade our chance for healthy, functioning river systems and the vibrant ecosystems that they support for a salty snack food that is mostly exported.

I urge the State Water Board to stand firm on the proposal to increase the flows of the San Joaquin tributaries to support the restoration of the Bay-Delta system which is so vital to so many species of wildlife, not only fish.

Sincerely,

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