



1/3/2017

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Jeanine Townsend, Clerk of the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814-0100
Fax # (916) 341-5620

RE: 2016 Bay Delta Plan Amendment and SED

Dear Sirs,

As a third generation California native and resident of the Tuolumne and Stanislaus River watersheds, I am writing to implore you to take the most aggressive action possible to restore healthy flows throughout the original range of our indigenous, anadromous fisheries, and associated ecosystems.

My wife and I rely on wild-caught salmon for a large percentage of our dietary protein and nutrition. These fish are the most healthy, best tasting, and ecologically sustainable foods of our region. If our watersheds were properly managed, we could see a hundred times more salmon here, with enormous ecological multiplier benefits from the headwaters to the Delta and Bay. In addition, the commercial and recreational salmon fishery would flourish, creating a very significant economic multiplier effect for our region and state, including boat and tackle sales, hotels, restaurants, sports equipment stores, etc..

Restoring sustainable ecological function and health to the San Joaquin River watershed should be the Water Board's highest priority as a public agency. The current trends and conditions throughout the watershed are a travesty for fish, wildlife, recreation, and downstream communities. This condition indicates a failure to protect our Public Trust Resources for all beneficial uses and future generations.

Chronic, excessive water diversions have resulted in "Super-critically Dry" river conditions in half of the years, over the past four decades, with less than half of the natural flow left to nourish the Riverine, Delta, and San Francisco Bay ecosystems. The residual flows are often impaired and toxic due to high temperatures, depleted oxygen, concentrated levels of pollutants, and pathogens. Water diversions are the ecological equivalent of "robbing Peter to pay Paul." They epitomize the unsustainable, and un-democratic practices of our culture, which exploit the many to enrich the few.

The Water Board's own 2010 "Development of Flow Criteria for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Ecosystem," indicates that 60% of unimpaired flow between February and June is needed to protect fish and wildlife in the lower San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced Rivers. I consider that estimate to be low, and would prefer to see at least 80% of free flows retained in the watershed to inundate flood plains, restore riparian and off channel habitat for many wildlife species, stimulate fish passage spawning, and increased survival rates of anadromous fish. Higher flows will recharge ground water, maintain natural sediment transport, enhance water quality, and promote riparian ecosystems and wetlands. The many species that will benefit from increased flows, include fish and fowl, eagles and otters, amphibians, and people including the birders, boaters and anglers of this and future generations.

We owe it to ourselves and future generations to put the ecological pieces back in place, in order to restore the puzzle of ecosystem function before it is too late. The world would be tragically diminished without the giant Sturgeon, annual Salmon runs, and great bird migrations that have sustained us and our grandfathers, and countless generations of Native Americans.

The problem of over allocation of river water is ecological. The solution is political, and we are obligated to find it. Where there is a will, there is a way. Water use decreased by 30% in the Hetch Hetchy service area over the past ten years with minimal effort and inconvenience to customers. Commercial agriculture has hardly begun to devise and deploy water conserving Best Management Practices. Farmers must be made to live within their means in regards to irrigation.

To go forward and prosper, California must implement systems of local and regional sustainability. Toward that end, keeping waters within their native watershed is an essential element.

Sincerely, Clay Knopf
1/3/2017

