



Dear Chair Felicia Marcus and State Water Board Members:

Thank you for your attempts to restore the Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Merced Rivers and provide essential flows to the San Francisco Bay Delta. I agree with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and SWRCB that *at least* 50% of unimpaired flow will be needed to restore populations of salmon, steelhead and other wildlife, as well as protect the health of the Bay-Delta estuary.

No doubt the flows needed to adequately improve water quality and conditions for fish and wildlife will lead to substantial cuts in water deliveries to cities such as Modesto, Merced and San Francisco, and to farms that have grown accustomed to a relatively abundant water resource. Many of these economic impacts will be local and for a few they may be significant. I've read the newspaper accounts and the cries of "they're stealing our water!"

Twenty years ago driving east from Oakdale, Waterford or Snelling there was little but pastureland stretching to the foothills of the Sierras. Today there are endless miles of new orchards and vineyards. New subdivisions and a housing boom sprawled across the Valley. At the same time flows on the Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Merced Rivers dwindled and the abundant salmon and steelhead trout all but vanished.

And slowly, a little at a time, the economic losses began to stack up. Fishing declined. Bait stores and tackle shops closed their doors. Invasive plants and toxic Blue Green algae began to infest large areas of the Delta. Water skiers, paddle borders, sailors and anglers are afraid of bodily contact with delta and river water. Residents of Stockton and Discovery Bay can no longer swim in the water bordering their homes. Marinas are half empty and falling into decay. Today, everyone dependent on a healthy Bay-Delta estuary suffers.

As far away as Eureka or Morro Bay the loss of salmon has had an impact. There are only a third as many commercial salmon boats as there were in the mid-nineties. Striped Bass populations are at record low levels and have vanished from the ocean beaches. Recreational fishing has seen a significant decline statewide (fishing license sales are down by 50% in the last 30 years), commercial fishing licenses dropped from over fourteen thousand to less than six thousand from 1988 to 2008.

As an economist, I believe what took place was a huge transfer of wealth, one small increment at a time, away from the large segment of the general public who benefited from a healthy Bay-Delta, to a relative few who have profited directly from water diverted from the Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Merced Rivers. This water was once part of the Public Trust. No one is "stealing their water" – we just want back what was once ours.

**Please restore adequate flows to the Valley rivers.**

Thanks you for your consideration.

David Hickson

Alameda, California