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

Dear Chairman and Members of the State Water Resources Control Board:

I am writing to comment on your draft proposed update to the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan, specifically the parts that set freshwater flow standards for the San Joaquin River and its main tributaries. The proposed river flow standards are inadequate to support restoration of Chinook salmon populations in the San Joaquin River valley and water quality in that valley or the San Francisco Bay's estuary. I urge you to protect public fisheries and water quality by requiring that more of the San Joaquin River's flow makes it to the Bay.

My family has lived in California since 1851. When they first arrived Chinook salmon were abundant and an integral part of a web of life that included not only humans, but Orca whales and other animals as well. This web of interdependent species, as well as all of the recreational and commercial fishing industry that is tied to the Chinook salmon are now being threatened due to the human-planned reduction of the flows of the San Joaquin River and her three main tributaries. While current standards call for protecting only up to 40% of the flow in the San Joaquin's main tributaries, this is inadequate. Agency and independent scientists call for 60% of natural flow to allow for the restoration of Chinook salmon populations to the San Joaquin Valley. This is important for their threatened survival today, and even more crucial when you consider the threats facing this species due to climate change.

I understand that there are many stresses put on the water supplied by the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced Rivers, including both urban and agricultural demands. San Francisco has already made great reductions in its use of water from the Tuolumne, and can be called upon to do more. Agribusinesses can improve the efficiency of irrigation resources. Innovations such as drip systems and improved scheduling can stretch the effectiveness of irrigation water enormously. In short, agriculture in the areas fed by the tributaries to the San Joaquin River can get by with less water so that it can continue to sustain and even increase Chinook salmon populations.

Thank you for considering the needs of all Californians as you set water quality standards that fully protect our native species.

Sincerely, 
Liz Ruhland