

Public Comment
2016 Bay-Delta Plan Amendment & SED
Deadline: 3/17/17 12:00 noon



From: Sonia Diermayer
To: [commentletters](#)
Subject: Comment Letter – 2016 Bay Delta Plan Amendment & SED
Date: Friday, March 17, 2017 4:14:55 AM
Attachments: [SWRCB Ph I Flow Targets-Mar2017.pdf](#)

Dear Ms. Townsend,

Attached please find my comments regarding the State Board's Draft Revised SED for Phase I of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan.

Thank you!

Sonia Diermayer

Sonia Diermayer
12721 Brookpark Rd.
Oakland, CA 94619

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

March 17, 2017

Re: Draft Revised SED for Phase I of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan -
Support 60% of Unimpaired Flow Objective on Lower San Joaquin and Tributaries

Dear Members of the Board,

My connection with the San Joaquin River and its tributaries began on childhood trips through the Central Valley to the high meadows of Yosemite National Park and other magnificent Sierra Nevada locations, where my family hiked and camped. At age 12 I remember floating in the headwaters of the San Joaquin River near Devil's Postpile trying to grasp how this very same water would work its way across to the west side of the mountain range, north along the Central Valley and out through the Delta and San Francisco Bay, passing our home in Berkeley on its way to the ocean!

In my current frequent travels down the San Joaquin Valley by train I eagerly watch for the Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Merced Rivers as they pass under Amtrak bridges. It's a terrible disappointment to frequently see them reduced to mere trickles and to have learned as an adult that for decades not a drop of the mighty San Joaquin reached the sea at all. It's very disturbing that in fact the San Francisco Bay experiences manmade "catastrophic drought" due to lack of enough freshwater in almost half of all years!

At your Merced hearing on December 19, numerous farm interests' and officials' claimed that your flows proposal was a "taking" and that reduced surface water diversions would cause groundwater depletion. I have utmost respect for farming as a way of life and tremendous sympathy for the frequent hardships faced by farming families, employees and communities due to the vagaries of weather and economics. But aiming to increase the water in those tributary rivers to an average of 40% of unimpaired flows from February to June as the Board is proposing in fact represents a tiny step toward "returning" what has been taken over the course of many decades by agricultural and urban interests in a greedy free-for-all. The same greed has resulted in massive overdrafting of aquifers and consequent land subsidence. Permanent, unsuitable crops were planted and acreage expanded with a total disregard for the consequences.

For millennia the great rivers had functioned as two-way mega-highways transporting nutrients up- and downriver in the form of gargantuan fish runs and sedimentation. Floodwaters spread across the valley floor percolating down to form rich aquifers. Those forces created the base on which today's agricultural bounty is grown. If our state's water system is now "broken", it is because humans broke it. Nature gave us an inch and we took a mile.

This is not about a few fish—but rather about a hugely complex, delicate, interdependent web of life. We are in that web together with the smelt, plankton, tule, waterfowl, otters, steelhead, sturgeon, algae, salmon, wetlands, shrimp, kelp, cranes, kelp and orcas...and the basis for all this life is sufficient fresh water to mix with the saline tidal inflows. The total amount of that fresh water is a limited, and possibly shrinking, pie. Urban and agricultural communities must share in the sacrifices to provide the basic conditions for a return to health of the San Joaquin River-Delta-SF Bay-Pacific Ocean ecosystem.

I urge you to revise your proposed flow targets upward to the 60% of unimpaired flows that your scientific studies concluded were necessary for restoring species viability. Please hold firm in your resolve to restore and protect the river and estuary ecosystems that help make this such a rich, productive state, and that mean so much to me and other Californians.

Sincerely,



Sonia Diermayer
Member, Water Committee
Sierra Club SF Bay Chapter

Cc:
State Senator Nancy Skinner
State Assembly Member Rob Bonta