



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

Ms. Townsend,

Please see below our comments on the State Water Board's

AMENDMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY/SACRAMENTO-SAN JOAQUIN DELTA ESTUARY AND SUPPORTING DRAFT REVISED SUBSTITUTE ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

The proposed flow objectives for the Substitute Environmental Document (SED) would require increased flows from three eastside, salmon-bearing tributaries to the San Joaquin River: the Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Merced Rivers. We are writing to strongly support the flow objectives proposed by the Board for the following reasons:

- San Francisco Bay is the outer-most edge of the largest estuary on the west coast of the Americas. The mixing of freshwaters from the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers along with our local rivers and streams creates a place of rich biological abundance. But this abundance is under siege through the slow starvation of its fresh water flow.
- The state's complex system of water movement and use has left the San Francisco Bay a starved estuary – with nearly 50% of the freshwater that it would otherwise receive being taken out of the system. A new report by the Bay Institute shines a bright light on what State Board scientists and others have been saying for years; critical fresh water flows into San Francisco Bay have been drastically reduced, threatening the survival of fish and wildlife, degrading water quality, and shrinking our beaches and marshlands.
- In June, the people of the Bay Area made a remarkable decision to restore the wetlands that ring our amazing bay. The passage of Measure AA and the \$500 million it will bring over the next 20 years will allow us to move faster to create and restore our marshes and creek mouths. This important work will help protect our bay-side communities against sea level rise while creating new places for our fish and wildlife to thrive. But without attention to the critical issue of freshwater flows, the hard work of baylands restoration will be jeopardized and \$500 million in investment threatened.

The time is now to address our freshwater flow crisis. The State Water Board's proposal for a small increase in the annual freshwater contribution from the streams on the San Joaquin River tributaries is a critical first step needed to begin to

address this ecological issue. As we watch this process unfold, we are deeply concerned that this proposed small step is being bitterly opposed by numerous water users. The stark fact is that every stream and river in California is over-appropriated with cascading paper water rights. There will never be enough water to satisfy the demands of all those clamoring to take more out of waterways of the state. By law, the Water Board must balance the competing demands of the state's water users, but it is the only the Board that can act on the needs of the silent; the native fish and wildlife who will not survive as species without the intervention, now, of this Board.

We urge the Board to approve the proposed flow objectives and to move ahead with Phase II and III of the work to save our fresh water-starved estuary. We thank the Board and the excellent SWRCB staff for their hard work on this vital issue.

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Citizens of California