



State Water Resources Control Board, Phase I SED HEARING, 16 December 2016

Dear Chair Marcus and Board Members:

The San Francisco Bay Delta is the largest estuary on the Pacific Coast of North America. Water quality in the San Francisco Bay Delta Estuary is the most critical issue facing the State of California. The Delta Estuary is a fragile ecosystem that depends on significant, fresh, cool, unpoisoned water flow from the San Joaquin River.

I am concerned that the Substitute Environmental Document (SED) for the Delta Water Quality Control Plan, will actually further degrade our precious Resource. A statewide water plan must mandate permanent reduction of exports in order to restore and protect the Delta. The San Joaquin River must reach Chipps Island to preserve the entire estuary. The bifurcation of the upper San Joaquin River unreasonably shifts this incompatible burden to the southern San Joaquin. Unsustainable water exports must stop now to comply with State law:

Water Code Section 11460 states that no water shall be diverted for export unless all the needs of the Delta watersheds are met including irrigation, municipal, industrial, and fish and wildlife. The SWRCB's current proposal is in direct violation of State law.

When I speak of Chipps Island, I know where that is, just before entering Suisun Bay by sailboat. I have sailed back and forth from Stockton to San Francisco many times in the past 30 years. Chipps Island is where the San Joaquin waterway meets the Sacramento. In sailor's terms, this is the naturally evolved system to flush out the estuary which creates the balanced ecosystem.

From observation while sailing and swimming, I know salt water has migrated, now past the Antioch Bridge toward Stockton. During the past 30 years, water exports have increased. Salinity standards in the South Delta must not be weakened. Water quality standards must be protected for agriculture, drinking water, municipal discharge, fisheries, and ground water recharge.

The State Water Board must consider environmental justice communities in terms of drinking water and domestic use. Phase 1 Recirculated Draft SED fails to consider environmental justice communities in chapters 5 and 9 (hydrology/water quality and groundwater).

It is unconscionable in terms of environmental justice, that water protected by the great state of California is unfit for fishing, human contact and recreation. There are significant health, human suffering and economic costs associated with poor water quality in the San Joaquin Delta.

Water Quality will never improve if unsustainable exports continue.

This year, cyanobacteria, commonly called Blue-Green algae, throughout the Delta made any human contact unpleasant to deadly.

The Delta I love as a magnificent estuary has become inhospitable to animals and humans. Cyanobacteria are naturally occurring phenomena. It sometimes turns toxic when there are large surface blooms. The BLOOM of 2016 was encouraged by poor water quality conditions in the south San Joaquin Delta.

Blue-green algae multiply quickly in water bodies with high nutrient levels such as phosphorous or nitrogen, and particularly when the water is warm and the weather is calm. Blue-green algae growth can become seemingly explosive when lots of nutrients are present,

Waters that flow slowly with low turbulence are at particularly high risk of algal blooms.

There is no remedy for this bloom outside of reducing nutrient levels and increasing water flows. The BLOOM of 2016 is a symptom of the poor health of the fragile Delta ecosystem.

In late summer this year, I visually monitored the bloom condition at low and high tide. I was hoping that the water would be clear at high tide! But it wasn't. My location was the Stockton Sailing Club, particularly because I wanted to use a paddle board in the Delta waters. The San Joaquin River meets the Shipping Channel nearby. If the estuary was working properly, there might not have been a bloom!

The Sailing Club has a strong youth, learn to sail, program in the summer. The classes are open to the community. One of the first exercises is tipping over – falling out of the sailing dinghy, into the water and then righting the boat and getting back in. This is an essential skill when learning to sail a small boat. In August and September warning signs stating “water not safe for human contact” were posted all around the docks and levee of the Sailing Club. Blue-green algae will have a huge negative economic impact to the recreation and tourist industry in the Delta and to the city of Stockton.

Sailing has given me the adventure and indeed the privilege of exploring the Pacific Coast from Glacier Bay, Alaska to Panama. All of the sailing trips start from Stockton on the San Joaquin River. It gives me great joy to intimately know how Stockton is connected to Bays and Ports north and south of the Golden Gate. Pacific salmon, up and down the coast, are dependent on the flow of Sierra snowmelt to thrive. The interconnection of the ecosystem is exciting! The Great San Francisco Bay Delta Estuary is so unique in its 1,000 miles of waterways, unmatched on the Pacific Coast of the Americas. The Delta is a treasure and a public trust for all of California.

Preservation of this great Estuary cannot be compromised. If unsustainable water exports are not dealt with, water quality and quantity objectives for the Delta cannot be met. A statewide water plan that establishes permanent reduction of exports is essential.

Respectfully,

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