



June 15, 2016

Mr. Steven G. Saiz  
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board  
895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

VIA: E-mail to [Steve.Saiz@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Steve.Saiz@waterboards.ca.gov)

RE: Amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan  
for the Central Coastal Basin (Basin Plan)

Dear Mr. Saiz:

Monterey County Farm Bureau represents family farmers and ranchers in the interest of protecting and promoting agriculture throughout our County. We strive to improve the ability of those engaged in production agriculture to provide a reliable supply of food and fiber through responsible stewardship of our local resources.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide summary comments on the proposed amendment to the Basin Plan:

- The proposed revision to the Basin Plan includes adding language from the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board's Vision of Healthy Watersheds and Measurable Goals. Given the long timeframe needed to achieve healthy watershed functions, these goals should remain goals and not become regulatory in context. We request that clarifying language be included in the Basin Plan that notes the Healthy Watershed Vision contains goals for planning purposes that are not intended to be included as Water Quality Standards or Objectives in Permits or Water Management Plans.
- Beneficial uses are being added to two waterbodies in the north Monterey County area; the Reclamation Ditch and Tembladero Slough are noted in the amendment as critical habitat and migratory habitat waters for Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). These waterbodies were previously not listed for Steelhead habitat due to sediment loads, either naturally occurring or anthropogenic. It is doubtful these waterbodies are supportive habitat for Steelhead because of the sediment load. By adding the beneficial use of Steelhead critical habitat and migratory habitat waters, these waterbodies will be subjected to new regulatory requirements that will negatively impact local landowners and the communities



in the area. In addition, these beneficial use designations could lead to food safety hazards for growers in the fields adjacent to these water features. Future watershed-level collaborative efforts between landowners, farmers, and regulators could be impeded by these beneficial use designations. As these waterbodies are hardly supportive of resident or migrating Steelhead, we urge that these beneficial uses not be included in the Basin Plan amendment. Consequently, adding Steelhead Critical Habitat and Migratory Habitat as beneficial uses to these two waterbodies may be in violation of the no-CEQA impact of the Basin Plan amendment as there will be definite and qualitative impacts to the local landowners.

We appreciate your taking into review our comments on the Basin Plan amendment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norman C. Groot'.

Norman C. Groot  
Executive Director



***Grower-Shipper Association of Central California***  
***“OUR MEMBERS: PARTNERS PRODUCING PROSPERITY”***

June 17, 2016

Mr. Steven G. Saiz  
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board  
895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Sent via E-mail to  
[Steve.Saiz@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Steve.Saiz@waterboards.ca.gov)

RE: Amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coastal Basin (Basin Plan)

Dear Mr. Saiz:

I'm writing on behalf of the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California. We represent the needs of over 350 member companies throughout Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Benito and Santa Clara counties. Please accept these comments regarding the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board's proposed amendments to the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coastal Basin (Basin Plan).

**Vision Statement Addition**

Basin plans are a regulation, as such it is inappropriate to include a Vision Statement as part of the Basin Plan. We are concerned that this statement could be interpreted as a regulatory mandate, instead of a goal. We are also concerned that these goals may not be scientifically achievable in the time periods set, and as we understand haven't been vetted or scientifically peer reviewed for achievability. The specific goals we're referencing include the following, on Page 11 of the proposed basin plan with track changed revisions:

- Healthy Aquatic Habitat – By 2025, 80 percent of aquatic habitat is healthy, and the remaining 20 percent exhibits positive trends in key parameters.
- Sustainable Land Management – By 2025, 80 percent of lands within a watershed will be managed to maintain healthy watershed functions, and the remaining 20 percent will exhibit positive trends in key watershed parameters.
- Clean Groundwater – By 2025, 80 percent of groundwater will be clean, and the remaining 20 percent will exhibit positive trends in key parameters.

It's noted on page of your staff report that "Because there is no possibility that the proposed edits may have a significant effect on the environment, these amendments are not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)." We would argue that if these become interpreted as a regulatory mandate, that statement would no longer be true. We echo our partners at Monterey County Farm Bureau in their request that clarifying language be included in the Basin Plan that notes the Healthy Watershed Vision contains goals for planning purposes that

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are not intended to be included as Water Quality Standards or Objectives in Permits or Water Management Plans.

### **Beneficial Uses**

As expressed in the CEQA scoping meeting on April 18, there are concerns about the applicability of many of the beneficial use listings currently in the basin plan, especially as many of these designations date from 1975. We maintain that some of the beneficial uses attributed to water bodies in the Salinas and Pajaro Valleys are not appropriate water uses and become the foundation for illogical regulations.

Specific to these amendments, beneficial uses being added to two water bodies, the Reclamation Ditch and Tembladero Slough, that are being described as potential critical habitat and migratory habitat waters for Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) but that doesn't mean that Steelhead are actually in these waterbodies, and unlike in other waterbodies where Steelhead were found, that wasn't specifically noted for these two waterbodies in the staff report. As we understand, these water features were previously not listed for steelhead habitat due to sediment loads, either naturally occurring or anthropogenic. It is doubtful these watersheds are supportive habitat for Steelhead because of the sediment load. By adding the beneficial use of Steelhead critical habitat and migration habitat, these water features will be subjected to new regulatory requirements that will negatively impact local landowners and the communities in the area. As we have considerable doubts that these waterbodies are supportive of resident or migrating Steelhead, we urge that this beneficial use not be included in the Basin Plan amendment.

We also concur with our partners at Monterey County Farm Bureau, specifically in our concern that adding Steelhead Critical Habitat and Migratory Habitat as beneficial uses to these waterbodies may be in violation of the no-CEQA impact to Agricultural Resources (noted on page 67 of the staff report) of the Basin Plan amendment as there will likely be definite and qualitative impacts to the local landowners.

### **Amendments to Clarify the Designation of Groundwater Beneficial Uses**

We are concerned with the incorporation of this language: “In addition, water used for irrigation and livestock watering shall not exceed the concentrations for those chemicals listed in Table 3-2. No controllable water quality factor shall degrade the quality of any groundwater resource.” With respect to the application of the primary drinking water standard to ground water, it is imperative to note that drinking water standards should only be applicable to those groundwaters that had a designated municipal beneficial use. Secondly, with respect to degradation of groundwater resources, it is inappropriate to prohibit degradation because degradation is allowed as long as it is consistent with the state's Anti-Degradation Policy.

### **Mean Water Quality Objectives**

We're concerned that going from a median to a mean is a substantive amendment, and that there needs to be further discussion on the intent and purpose of going to a mean calculation of water quality objectives.

3 | G S A Comment Letter – Amendments to Basin Plan 6.17.16

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these proposed changes. Please contact me at 831-422-8844 with questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Abby Taylor-Silva". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Abby Taylor-Silva  
Vice President, Policy & Communications  
Grower-Shipper Association of Central California