



Via electronic mail: commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov

February 17, 2017

Jeanine Townsend,
Clerk to the Board State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 100, Sacramento, CA 95812-2000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Comment Letter -- Beneficial Uses and Mercury Objectives

Dear Ms. Townsend:

In a letter dated October 3, 2016, the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria wrote to the State Water Resources Control Board to fully support the need for and inclusion of beneficial use definitions in the Draft Staff Report - Part 2 of the Water Quality Control Plan for Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays, and Estuaries of California – Tribal and Subsistence Fishing Beneficial Uses and Mercury Provisions. As you are aware, the current definitions utilized by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) do not capture the unique needs of tribes and do not reflect our use of waters for traditional and cultural purposes, nor do they reflect the reliance of fishing for subsistence, which in turn reflects on the interconnected relationships between tribal families and regional tribes, but also reflects on our need to pass our knowledge, traditions and culture on to current and future generations.

The proposed beneficial use definitions will allow us to continue our customs and traditions while simultaneously protecting the waters of our ancestors. We urge the SWRCB to maintain the tribal and subsistence fishing beneficial uses in the Plan as originally intended and not bifurcate or separate them for review at another time. We trust the SWRCB will encourage the Regional Water Quality Control Boards to work directly and in good faith with California tribes to honor this hard work and the definitions developed through the tribal consultation process.

Thank you for working with our Tribe and the tribes in California on this important tribal issue. If you would like to discuss this matter further please contact the Tribal Heritage Preservation Officer, Buffy McQuillen at (707) 566-2288 or by email at bmcquillen@gratonrancheria.com.

Sincerely,

Lorelle Ross, Vice Chairperson
Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria