

## State Water Resources Control Board

APR 28 2016

Steven E. Gomes, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Merced County Office of Education  
623 West 13th Street  
Merced, CA 95341

Dear Dr. Gomes:

### CONCERNS ASSOCIATED WITH POTENTIAL CHANGES TO SAN JOAQUIN RIVER FLOW REQUIREMENTS

Thank you for your letter dated March 8, 2016 to Chair Felicia Marcus, expressing your continued concerns with the potential effects of proposed changes to San Joaquin River flow and southern Delta water quality requirements. These will be included in the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (Bay-Delta Plan). You express concern that implementation of the plan will have significant effects on groundwater and drinking water and cause impacts to children in Merced County. As stated in your letter, State Water Board staff met with you and other officials on October 8, 2015 to discuss your concerns with the December 31, 2012 draft Substitute Environmental Document (SED), and to provide an update on the progress of the Board's changes to the SED that are being made in response to comments and new information.

Our recirculated draft of the SED will include several new chapters that address concerns raised by you and others who could be affected by implementation of the Bay-Delta Plan. Among the new chapters is one that addresses potential impacts to drinking water sources. The recirculated draft will also have an expanded analysis of potential groundwater impacts. We believe the revised SED will include analyses that address your concerns and the similar concerns we have heard from other stakeholders.

I want to assure you that the State Water Board is committed to a transparent public process. As described in my August 20, 2016 letter, there will be opportunities for you to comment on the analyses and conclusions in the recirculated SED after its release in May or June, and before the final SED is adopted by the State Water Board later this year. Submittal of your written comments, and participation in the workshop that will be held on the recirculated SED, are the best ways for you to express your concerns and opinions. State Water Board staff will carefully review comments provided on the draft SED and provide responses prior to preparing a final SED.

Finally, I want to address your specific comment that the State Water Board is indifferent "to the known consequences that the plan will have on the children of Merced County." This could not be farther from the truth. Updating the Bay-Delta Plan is a challenging task; there are many

competing demands that must be considered and the needs of the people of Merced County, especially the children, are a paramount concern for the Board.

As you point out, water supply reliability is an ongoing concern for some portions of the County. Over the last few years, the Board has provided over \$750,000 in drought emergency funding to drill and restore wells and provide water to drought stricken communities in Merced County. Much of this funding has specifically been devoted to provide water to schools. Our Division of Financial Assistance and Division of Drinking Water stand ready to work with Merced County water suppliers to help address the long term reliability of their systems.

Thank you again for taking the time to write. When the recirculated SED is released, I will be looking out for your comments. In the meantime if you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Larry Lindsay, the Chief of the Bay-Delta: San Joaquin Unit in the State Water Board's Division of Water Rights, at (916) 341-5358 or via e-mail at [larry.lindsay@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:larry.lindsay@waterboards.ca.gov). Written correspondence should be addressed as follows: State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Rights, Attn: Larry Lindsay, P. O. Box 2000, Sacramento, CA 95812-2000.

Sincerely,

  
Thomas Howard  
Executive Director