

Emailed to: commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov



November 23, 2016

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

Comment Letter – 2016 Bay Delta Plan Amendment & SED

Thank you for your efforts to protect and revive the San Francisco Bay-Delta and river system. We are writing to urge you to increase the unimpaired flow on the San Joaquin River and its three major tributaries to at least 50% in the 2016 Bay Delta Plan. In 2010 the State Water Board issued a report titled *Development of Flow Criteria for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Ecosystem* that determined that approximately 60% of unimpaired flow between February and June would be fully protective of fish and wildlife in the lower San Joaquin River and its three major tributaries. The current plan calls for only 40% flow which is not sufficient to protect the Delta ecosystem.

350 Bay Area is a volunteer organization in the Bay Area with over 10,000 members working to fight climate change. As an organization focused solely on climate change we are very aware that the dire water situation in California is due in great part to man-made climate change. The predictions show that the drought will only get worse over the coming years.

While many people concerned about climate change think about rising sea levels, large storms or water shortages as it impacts humans, it is the loss of species that is the direst and most concerning threat from climate change. Humans can more readily adapt to changes, but other species cannot. Changes in weather patterns and water availability can severely stress species and ecosystem. It is projected that we face up to 30% species loss globally on our current path with climate change.

The Bay-Delta is a critical ecosystem, our local ecosystem, that we must protect. It forms the West Coast's largest estuary, providing habitat for more than 500 species of wildlife. It serves as a major stopover for the Pacific Flyway and as a migration pathway for salmon, steelhead and sturgeon traveling to and from their home streams to the Pacific Ocean. It is currently severely water stressed and at risk. Historically, populations of spawning salmon may have exceeded 400,000 fish in the San Joaquin River Basin, but in many recent years that figure has plummeted to just a few thousand. Salmon are a keystone species, providing food for other animals and transporting nutrients from the ocean to upland habitats. More than 100 species depend on salmon.

As the species clearly responsible for the problem, it is our responsibility to do everything we can to protect the habitats and species at risk. We cannot change the rainfall levels today with policy, however, we can ensure that we provide enough water to continue to support the abundant and amazing ecosystem we have in the Bay Delta and watershed. We should be

looking for every way we can increase our conservation and reduce our use, not reduce water flows to the point of threatening our local ecosystem.

Conservation is possible and works. In just the last 10 years, water use in the Hetch Hetchy service area was reduced by 30%. The agricultural sector, which uses 80% of the water, can reduce water use significantly through efficient irrigation practices. We have immense opportunities to conserve, costs effectively, that have been untapped. We must pursue these options first before threatening the amazing and abundant life in our backyard.

Thank you again for all your work to protect our precious local ecosystem and resources.

Sincerely,

Steering Committee
350 Bay Area
350bayarea.org