

To the State Water Resources Control Board:

## Policy Statement

The Delta has been home to my family for four generations. SH Merwin & Sons, the family farm, has been in operation for more than 80 years. I am raising my sons in what we call the Home Ranch house, the house my grandpa brought my grandma home to in 1929. I hardly know where the Delta ends and I begin, because it is a part of me. On returning from places far away, I roll the windows down, so I can smell the baking blackberries and figs that grow along the river banks and slough banks, the warm tules, the fresh hay.

I have seen a huge influx of wildlife in my time. Our ecosystem is thriving more than it was 40 years ago. The ranch is home to herons, mallards, pheasants, orioles, magpies, more birds, really, than I can name. I see coyotes, mink, otters, muskrats, foxes, opossums, raccoons, beaver, cottontail, and occasional deer, and still more critters than I can name. The day and night are melodious with frogs and waterbirds. In the early winter flocks of geese and cranes fly over the house, near enough to hear the whoosh of their wings beating the air.

And the cool breeze blows in the evenings, and the sunsets inspire silence. Artists come from everywhere because the light in the Delta is more radiant, reflected and diffused, than anywhere. The river, grand and slow, shows the sky by day, and the moon at night. Nighttime Courtland lights reflected on calm water takes me back to childhood.

In Clarksburg on a warm autumn Wednesday evening, I hear choirs rehearsing, kids at soccer practice, low chatter from the porch at the library. Our community is busy, healthy, and wholesome. We care about each other. We welcome families from surrounding areas into our churches and schools, because they want to be here too.

So I ask you this: In this place which delights our senses in every way, how can we begin to imagine the loss that those tunnels would bring about?

The tunnels would bring catastrophe to all people and animals that call the Delta home. The stench of the sludge alone would ruin our Delta environment. The incessant noise of the pile driving will ruin our communities, our schools, our churches. There will be large equipment-clogged roads, which will inhibit our volunteer firefighters from getting to scenes of emergency in time.

And then there is the water. I know from experience that when the ground is shaken, such as happens when huge piles are driven, good water wells foul for miles around. Bigger than that, if the fresh water is sucked out of our Delta, brackish water would back in. SH Merwin and Sons and all its agricultural neighbors wouldn't have the fresh water they need. The fields and orchards and vineyards will become sicker and sicker, and before long would be ruined by the salt.

The plan for mitigating the loss of water and water quality is no plan. No truckloads of water would be forthcoming to run our homes and irrigate our crops.

And there is no mitigation for the demise of a home, a family farm legacy, a healthy community, an awe-inspiring place which delights all the senses. There is no mitigation for losing these.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Merwin  
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