



Dear California Water Board-

I am writing to protest the current handling of the The Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan.

Allowing only 35% of the natural flow out to the ocean is a grave environmental and financial mistake for California. Our rivers have historically been the economic engine that drives the state, with millions of salmon who spawn, allowing up to 50% of the valuable catch to be taken sustainably, only to return year after year, bring in a valuable commercial product to our doorsteps each year.

Instead the Water Board has allowed itself to be held hostage by agricultural interest who are focused on maintaining as much water for large monoculture farming practices as possible. Much of the land which the irrigation companies are trying to protect require price supports and artificially low water prices in order to be competitive. Many of these same lands will be out of production in 20 years due to rising salinity levels, which are a huge problem in the valley, with no solution other than to conserve on water and use modern irrigation techniques.

Growers are not the enemy, but they have little economic incentive to conserve under current western water rights. If we spent 1/2 as much on conservation as we do on development we could have a water surplus.

- At least half of the San Joaquin River's natural flow should reach the Delta during the first six months of each year. And that water needs to flow in the Natural River Channel. Flows in the summer and fall should be sufficient to maintain fish and wildlife, water quality and recreational opportunities.
- Low river flows impede fish passage, concentrate pollutants, raise water temperatures, decrease dissolved oxygen, and eliminate migratory clues.
- 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 fish.
- 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.
- The commercial salmon fishery in California is on the brink. The salmon population was so low in 2008 and 2009 that the commercial fishing season had to be cancelled.
- The Bay-Delta 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 path for salmon, steelhead and sturgeon traveling to and from their home streams to the Pacific Ocean.

- Up to 6.8 million acre-feet (2.2 trillion gallons) of water per year are pumped from the southern Delta for agriculture and urban uses.
- Through better management of snowmelt, water efficient irrigation practices, and replacing lower-value, water-intensive crops with higher-value, water-efficient crops, we could grow more food with less water.

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