



There is no life without water, and nowhere is this sentiment truer than in California, where water is critical to the vitality of every part of the state. But that does not give bureaucrats the justification to decimate the San Joaquin Valley to divert water from some areas to give even more water to others.

The State Water Resources Control Board quietly decided on New Year's Eve to increase water exports for fish in the San Joaquin Bay-Delta. It recommended increasing water flow by 35 percent along the Merced, Tuolumne, and Stanislaus rivers from February 1 to June 30 each year – the worst time possible.

Since the increased flows would occur in the spring, it would mean less water in our reservoirs each summer when we need it most. If the Board's decision is enforced, it would fallow approximately 210,000 acres of farmland in San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced counties in dry years.

Even the Board admits that its proposal would create an “unavoidable and significant” impact. Besides turning even more agricultural fields into dust bowls, it would put hundreds, if not thousands, of people out of work and significantly raise water rates. The human impact would be tremendous and far too much for our already struggling region to bear.

Stanislaus County alone has a 15 percent unemployment rate, which is much higher than the statewide rate of 9.7 percent. In some Valley communities, unemployment reaches to the 30 and 40 percent range, rates found in developing countries. And in many neighborhoods, we find unspeakable poverty, low graduation rates, and poor health care due to a lack of jobs and, in some places, a lack of clean water.

Unfortunately, such facts seem to elude the Board. It even fails to include solid scientific evidence explaining how its action would help the state. The Board sends the Valley its sympathy in return for our sacrifice. But what does our sacrifice buy?

The simple answer is that our sacrifice indirectly gives powerful political interests in Southern California more water to maintain and expand upon their way of life, ignoring the fact that there are other ways to increase water supplies for those communities.

The lack of rain this winter is certainly not helping our state and we all must do our part to conserve the water we do have. But the water crisis we are now in is mostly man-made. Politicians and bureaucrats in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. wavered as the federal government shut off our water to save the Delta Smelt. They wavered when we asked for help in modernizing our crumbling water infrastructure. And they are wavering yet again when we are calling out for help to stop this latest attempt to take our water.

As residents of the Valley that we are proud to call home, we must stand up and make sure that the Board hears our voices. Its devastating decision must be overturned. I am encouraged that Valley Democratic and Republican legislators are standing together in this fight, but we need everyone in the community to stand with us.

The Board's decision is not final. It has scheduled a public hearing on March 20 in Sacramento, which provides residents an opportunity to speak out. Please contact my district office at [\(209\) 576-6425](tel:(209)576-6425) for more information.

If we fail to speak up, we will certainly lose a larger percentage of the Valley's water for generations to come. We know that without water, agriculture and future generations will have little hope for economic prosperity here in the Valley. We must act before it is too late.

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Sent from my iPhone