

Jeanine Townsend
Clerk of the Board
State Water Resources Control Board



Dear State Water Board,

I am writing to you today to comment on the Bay Delta Water Quality Plan. I am urging you to set a threshold that at least half of the rivers' natural flows reach the delta in order to maintain a healthy ecosystem. While you probably hear from a great many of the organized industries that want to divert water from the delta, there are a similarly large number of people who benefit economically from a strong ecosystem in the commercial fishing industry. And we all benefit from a healthy environment.

Our priority must be first and foremost on protecting our environment. Salmon are a keystone species that provide the start to the whole lifecycle on land. As I learned through a visit to Alaska, they are the source of nutrients from the ocean being brought up into the hills where other animals then take that nutrition out from the streams into the surrounding areas. That then enables plant growth and the whole cycle of life to begin. I mention Alaska because up there we can still witness "fresh starts" of areas. They have landslides where entire slopes are cleared of soil and all nutrition. By studying these areas we have learned the whole process can take several hundred years to reach a stable ecology. But it always starts with the salmon as the only ones who bring nutrition far upslope.

Right now, many seasons of the salmon are endangered. Different species of salmon spawn at different seasons. Together that means that certain species of salmon are threatened with extinction. Once they are gone from our rivers, they may never return. And when you think of how many other species of animals (over 500, including ourselves) around us are dependent upon those salmon, it is frightening to think about how we are harming them. We keep pumping more water to enable more people to live here, but then we just need more water for crops to feed those people and it perpetuates. We have already outgrown our resources and we have to just accept that we have to stop taking more.

Practically speaking, I don't know about you, but I like to eat salmon just as much as those central valley vegetables and I pay a whole lot more for it. I would rather see more of our water going to help them and bring their price down.

Ross Heitkamp
Mountain View, CA