



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Kathleen Grassi, R.D., M.P.H.
Director

June 30, 2015

Felicia Marcus, Board Chairwoman
State Water Resources Control Board
PO Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

Dear Chairwoman Marcus:

As the Interim Director of Environmental Health for the Merced County Department of Public Health, Division of Environmental Health, I am writing to request the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to conduct extensive scoping meetings with Merced County, as well as other local jurisdictions in the Central Valley, that will be impacted by SWRCB's proposed flow increase in the Stanislaus, Merced and Tuolumne rivers as outlined in the 2012 Bay-Delta Plan.

Many communities in the Merced area are already experiencing well production problems and drinking water quality issues. The "significant but unavoidable impact" cited in the Plan's "Groundwater Resources" chapter as one of the results of its implementation, cannot be dismissed. In April 2015, Merced County adopted a groundwater ordinance, Merced County Code Chapter 9.27, which evaluates impacts for each well to be constructed within unincorporated areas of the County. Yet, despite this groundbreaking effort, the proposed increased flows will have significant impacts to the water supplies within local groundwater basins.

I have been in contact with Stanislaus County's Director of Environmental Resources regarding the proposed increased flows. As you are aware, Merced and Stanislaus Counties are at the epicenter of the groundwater crisis, and the drought has had an economic impact to the local agricultural industry. Over 800,000 people live in the two counties. In Stanislaus County, over 55 percent of our population is Latino, African-America, Asian, or other minority group. In Merced County, these minority groups comprise 72 percent of the population. Both counties have severely underperforming economics, job and educational opportunities. Groundwater is the primary source of drinking water for the majority of the local population.

The Bay-Delta Plan does not adequately address emergency drought conditions and "zero allocation" of surface water when considering impacts of the Lower San Joaquin River alternatives described within Chapter 9.1 of the Plan, and only notes that there may be "reduced" surface water supplies leading to potential impacts. The Plan sorely understates the devastation this recommendation will cause.

As an Interim Director of Environmental Health, I am required to ensure that safe, adequate, and dependable water supplies are available for domestic use. To best perform that function, I am requesting that the SWRCB engage Merced County on these important issues. I look forward to your response. For additional discussion, I may be contacted at (209) 381-1087.

Respectfully,


Vicki Jones, MPA, REHS
Interim Director of Environmental Health

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cc: John Pedrozo, District 1
Chairman, Merced County Board of Supervisors

Hub Walsh, District 2
Merced County Board of Supervisors

Daron McDaniel, District 3
Merced County Board of Supervisors

Deidre Kelsey, District 4
Merced County Board of Supervisors

Jerry O'Banion, District 5
Merced County Board of Supervisors

Jim Brown, Chief Executive Officer
Merced County

Kathleen Grassi, Director
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