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7
8 **BEFORE THE**
9 **CALIFORNIA STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD**

10
11 HEARING IN THE MATTER OF
12 CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER
RESOURCES AND UNITED STATES
13 BUREAU OF RECLAMATION REQUEST
FOR A CHANGE IN POINT OF DIVERSION
14 FOR CALIFORNIA WATERFIX

TESTIMONY OF ESPERANZA VIELMA

1 I, ESPERANZA VIELMA, do hereby declare:

2 INTRODUCTION

3 1. I am executive director of Café Coop, a non-profit cooperative incubator business for
4 social entrepreneurs, free-lancers, and artists in Stockton, which I founded in 2014. Through Café
5 Coop, I also promote San Joaquin County in Silicon Valley to attract entrepreneurs to the Delta
6 region. I also consult with Restore the Delta as a Delta Ambassador, conducting outreach and access
7 for environmental justice communities in San Joaquin County and the northern San Joaquin Valley. I
8 earned a double Bachelor's degree in Spanish and Chicano Studies from the University of
9 California, Berkeley, in 1991. During my undergraduate years, I was a Woodrow Wilson Public
10 Policy and International Affairs Fellow at the University of Texas, Austin, in 1990. I have been
11 active in local economic development and environmental justice efforts in Stockton and northern
12 San Joaquin Valley. I am also chair of the Environmental Justice Advisory Group for the San
13 Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, and serve on the boards of the Environmental Justice
14 Coalition for Water, the University of California, Berkeley, Alumni Association, and iHUB of San
15 Joaquin County. I also consult with the Nick Pacheco Law Group in Stockton.

16 SUMMARY

17 2. My testimony puts forward evidence supporting Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla's
18 testimony that alteration of flow and water quality from Petition facilities construction and operation
19 could affect local economic development. (RTD-20.) My testimony also provides examples of
20 agricultural entrepreneurship, agri-tourism, and local retail connections between business,
21 agriculture, and Delta water quality that are analyzed in the Delta Economic Sustainability Plan and
22 in Michael Machado's testimony for RTD. (RTD-301, RTD-30.) Such linkages between Delta water
23 quality and other economic sectors are vital to Stockton's economic recovery and future
24 development paths.

25 3. Some of these urban agricultural non-profit businesses also strive to develop the
26 agricultural skills and knowledge base of local residents in urban agriculture and provide fresh-
27 grown, affordable, and healthy foods for low-income urban Stockton residents. Such skills and
28 development efforts depend on sustaining Delta water quality.

1 URBAN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND WATER QUALITY

2 4. The Stockton community has pulled together to address its needs for good quality
3 drinking water and for healthful and affordable fresh foods. Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla’s testimony
4 (RTD-20) provided evidence of “food deserts” (areas that are both low-income neighborhoods with
5 low access to supermarkets or grocery stores). Water quality effects of Petition facilities could harm
6 Stockton-area urban agricultural development and farmers’ markets.

7 Community-led Urban Agricultural Development Efforts to Address Food Deserts and
8 Shortage of Affordable, Healthy Food in Stockton.

9 5. In this section of my testimony, I summarize and describe the efforts of three
10 Stockton-area urban agricultural development efforts: PUENTES, In Season (formerly known as
11 Stockton Harvest), and Central Valley Neighborhood Harvest all of which are located in the
12 Stockton area. Farmers’ markets reliant on Delta-sourced foods are found throughout San Joaquin
13 County.

14 ***PUENTES***

15 6. PUENTES is a Spanish acronym for “Promotores, Unidos para la Educación
16 Nacional de Tecnologías Sostenible,” or “Promoters United for the National Education of
17 Sustainable Technologies.” (RTD-406, cover page.) Its mission is to spread knowledge and effective
18 implementation of sustainable technology and stimulate a critical, cooperative and positive attitude
19 in underprivileged communities across the Americas. The organization's vision is to build a local
20 food system, including community supported gardens, to improve the health and economy of San
21 Joaquin County families. (RTD-406, p. 9.)

22 7. In 2012, PUENTES submitted a business plan to the Port of Stockton and the City of
23 Stockton to develop the Port's Boggs Tract property with a 3 acre community garden because the
24 community in that area had no local grocery store and limited access to healthy and nutritious food.
(RTD-406, cover letter, p. 1.) Their plan states that:

25 The need of nutritious food in this particular community is very strong because there
26 are only liquor stores around the area and not any actual grocery stores with healthy
27 selections of food. Most of these people in this community do not have the
28 transportation to reach the grocery stores to buy food; therefore, they make their ways
to the liquor stores to purchase “empty calories,” junk food. There are farmers’
markets nearby in Stockton, but since the targeted group of people in this project are
unable to gain access to these markets due to the lack of transportation, it will be ideal

1 for them to farm their own food and make a profit doing so. Not only will this farm
2 allow these people to have nutritious food, it will provide a source of income for the
3 farmers and their families.

3 (RTD-406, p. 16.)

4 8. The first year of operation, PUENTES informed the City of Stockton that its water
5 source at Boggs Tract would be CWSC, and that the company would donate its water supply in-kind
6 for the first year of operation. Since that time, PUENTES claims it has paid pay market rates. (RTD-
7 406, p. 25.)

8 ***In Season (formerly Stockton Harvest)***

9 9. The co-owner Eric Firpo of In Season, a new retail store scheduled to open Labor
10 Day weekend of 2016, seeks to connect people to nature through produce/artisan foods, a plant
11 nursery, a gift shop and, eventually, a café and deli. In Season will be located at 215 E. Alpine Ave,
12 Stockton CA 95204. The store will have local fruits and vegetables. Mr. Firpo will be sourcing
13 some of the vegetables himself from Roberts Island on the Delta. In Season will be a nursery and
14 artisan farmers' store, carrying local plants, vegetables, and fruits, as well as artisanal foods
15 available year-round. The In Season nursery will use well water to irrigate; and the kitchen will use
16 water from the City of Stockton. (RTD-402.)

17 10. Mr. Firpo is also the owner of Stockton Harvest. Stockton Harvest served as the
18 contract company for the CSA Community Supported Agriculture program for PUENTES. In
19 addition, Mr. Firpo served as the farm manager for PUENTES. Stockton Harvest started in the
20 midst of the last recession in 2010, as a gleaning service company to reduce wasted home garden
21 fruit and vegetables by organizing community members as suppliers of home-grown produce for sale
22 to local restaurants and of cooked products for farmers' markets through the business's owner, Mr.
23 Firpo. (RTD-407.) At one time, Stockton Harvest contracted with PUENTES; the company grew
24 food at Boggs Tract under the auspices of PUENTES (RTD-407; RTD-408; RTD-409.)

25 11. Mr. Firpo stated to me that he expects to source vegetables for In Season from
26 Roberts Island in the Delta. The fruits and vegetables to be sold in the store will be from local farms.
27 (RTD-402.)

1 Should the Petition Facilities be constructed and operated, Mr. Firpo stated that they will greatly
2 affect the success of the store. (RTD-402.) The nursery will be run with well water available on site.
3 However, he said, if Delta water quality worsened, he would have to find other farms further away to
4 source the store for his fruits and vegetables, and this would increase prices. His store, he stated,
5 would be greatly affected by water quality changes and farmers' ability to irrigate and grow crops
6 locally in the Delta. (RTD-402.)

7 ***Central Valley Neighborhood Harvest***

8 12. Central Valley Neighborhood Harvest is a nonprofit volunteer organization whose
9 mission is to prevent food insecurity and promote food justice, promote youth agriculture and life
10 skills, and promote sustainable use of urban resources. Don Aguillard the founder and CEO is a
11 master gardener. (RTD-401.) Mr. Aguillard also serves as planning commissioner for District 5 in
12 the City of Stockton. In addition Mr. Aguillard is a charter member for the City of Stockton
13 Mayor's task force on persons with disabilities. Central Valley Neighborhood Harvest is committed
14 to harvesting healthy and affordable food for Stockton area's poor, senior and disabled populations.
15 (RTD-401.) CV Neighborhood Harvest has received 9 acres from private donors in the Southeast
16 section of Stockton. (RTD-401.) They currently farm 2 acres and irrigate with both well water and
17 city water. In addition CV Neighborhood Harvest operates 2 school gardens and 6 urban community
18 sites. (RTD-401.) CV Neighborhood Harvest's web site is found online at
19 <http://cvneighborhoodharvest.org/>.

20 ***Farmers Markets in San Joaquin County***

21 13. The Stockton Convention and Visitors' Bureau web site lists nine different markets
22 that distribute local fresh food. These include: the Downtown Stockton Asiam Farmers' Market
23 (Saturdays), Downtown Stockton Certified Farmers Market (May through October), Downtown
24 Tracy Farmers' Market, Lodi Farmers Market, Manteca Farmers Market, the Market at Delta
25 College, Park West Place Farmers Market, Weberstown Mall Farmers Market, and the West Valley
26 Mall Farmers Market. (RTD-410; RTD-411.)

1 ***Black Urban Farmers Association (BUFA)***

2 14. Black Urban Farmers Association of Stockton takes as its mission “to grow healthy
3 nutritious food; to provide quality, affordable food to under-served individuals and communities
4 acting as food brokers; educate the community on the relationship between food, health and disease
5 prevention; inspire people of all ages to grow their own healthy food; and to create sustainable
6 subbing on food production, marketing ,and distribution.” (RTD-412, p. 2.) BUFA has a Facebook
7 page right now, with little other published information online about itself and its activities.
8 The group initiated community farming at the Boggs Tract Community Farm with some help from
9 PUENTES initially, and recently obtained acreage in French Camp south of Stockton. (RTD-413.)
10 At that location, BUFA planted fall crops in 2015 including sweet potatoes, collard greens, kale,
11 onion, black-eyed peas and pinto beans, as well as medicinal herbs and herbs that may serve as salt
12 substitutes. (Id.) BUFA’s water source at its new French Camp is groundwater, since most of the
13 surrounding farmers in the area use groundwater. Some of their inspiration appears attributable to
14 the work of cultural anthropologist and African-American farmer activist Gail Myers. (RTD-413;
15 RTD-414.)

16 Delta Amenities and Local Sourcing of Food and Wine

17 ***Mile Wine Company***

18 15. Mile Wine Company (MWC) is a combined panini bar, restaurant, and food and wine
19 shop. MWC strives to provide a selection of distinctive and fine wines locally and from around the
20 world, and offers a variety of cheeses, charcuterie, monthly winemaker dinners, a wine club, and
21 weekly wine classes by MWC’s owner, Paul Marsh. (RTD-403.) Mr. Marsh has 10 years’
22 experience in the wine industry and related businesses.

23 16. Mr. Marsh stated to me that MWC prides itself on being a farm-to-table restaurant.
24 This business model depends on using locally grown or raised animals, vegetables, herbs, and wines.
25 MWC’s suppliers include Johnson Burke Farms (vegetables), PUENTES (eggs), and several Lodi
26 wineries (Watts Winery, St. Sophia Winery, Piazza Winery, and Michael Klouda Winery). (RTD-
27 403.)

1 17. Mr. Marsh further stated to me that should the Petition Facilities be constructed and
2 operated he is concerned that water quality would be compromised and the restaurant would lose
3 focus for all of the locavores (locally-oriented people who prefer to eat and drink locally grown
4 foods and wines). The restaurant would lose access to its locally grown sources and therefore its
5 focus. In addition, prices would increase, which could detrimentally affect visitation and business.
6 Loss of business due to water quality effects could result further in job losses if his business had to
7 close. (RTD-403.)

8 ***TAPS Bar & Grill and eBeer Technology***

9 18. At this time, TAPS Bar & Grill, a sports bar in downtown Stockton, showcases a
10 unique an innovative beer tap system pioneered by eBeer. TAPS is co-owned by Subash Sil. eBeer's
11 tap systems provide patrons with self-serve beer tap access combined with a direct payment system.
12 This enables restaurants to dispense beer through either table taps or at common table locations.
13 (RTD-404.)

14 19. Because the eBeer technology governs and facilitates fluid control, other types of
15 beverages such as carbonated soft drinks can also be delivered directly to patrons' tables. This
16 facilitates the design of interactive environments within bars, restaurants, and other types of
17 entertainment venues. eBeer is looking at developing methods for adapting the technology to
18 catering business. (RTD-404.)

19 20. eBeer is an engineering company headquartered in Girona, Spain. It was founded in
20 2004 to take advantage of development and sale of automatic, precision controlled irrigation systems
21 for use in the Priorat (a famous Spanish high-quality wine-producing region in Cataluña). This
22 irrigation system was developed at the behest of the Government of Cataluña's water resources
23 management division. eBeer expanded into production of beer tap systems used now in 15 countries.
24 (RTD-404.)

25 21. Mr. Sil expressed concern to me that if the Petition Facilities are constructed and
26 operated, Delta water quality near downtown Stockton will be diminished. Currently, he stated, the
27 water hyacinth problem causes a bad odor in the entire area and a horrendous eyesore. I am
28

1 concerned that if the tunnels go through it will make doing business and attracting new investors to
2 our eBeer technology at TAPS Bar & Grill impossible to sell. (RTD-404.)

3 22. Mr. Sil stated that he and his business partners chose the downtown Stockton area
4 because of the location near the amenities provided by the Delta and the potential to bring in
5 interested clients from other parts of the country and the rest of the world. He is further concerned
6 that if the area became constantly infested with hyacinth, the area would become unbearable. (RTD-
7 404.)

8 23. He further stated his concern with Delta water quality because TAPS Bar & Grill also
9 supports local farmers and primarily buys locally the foods they sell. If local farmers are affected by
10 the tunnels, then so will local food businesses be affected, since local purchases would be reduced
11 and prices will increase. Mr. Sil added that he would have to pass the higher cost for local food on
12 to his customers, and that any loss of agricultural jobs would directly reduce the size of his customer
13 base at TAPS as well. (RTD-404.)

14 ***Tourism and Visit Stockton Activities***

15 24. Wes Rhea, Chief Executive Officer with Visit Stockton, spoke with me about
16 Stockton's efforts to attract tourism, which are dependent on interactions of Delta amenities with
17 water quality and of those interactions with visitors' experiences. (RTD-405.)

18 25. Visit Stockton (which is Stockton's Convention & Visitors Bureau) is charged with
19 the promotion and marketing of the City of Stockton as a meetings, events, and travel destination.
20 The bureau is a 501c6 non-profit organization funded by the collection of an assessment paid by
21 guests to Stockton lodging establishments.

22 26. Visit Stockton services include the development of an annual tourism marketing plan
23 and its implementation through advertising, public relations, tour package development,
24 online/electronic means, and attendance at consumer and trade shows. Rhea stated to me that
25 Stockton gains visitors because of its outstanding recreational opportunities, including professional
26 sports teams, an Olympic size ice rink, and the Delta, which provides thousands of miles of
27 waterways for water skiing, sailing, and other water activities.

1 27. The opportunity for visitors to visit the San Joaquin Delta waterways begins at the
2 heart of downtown Stockton at the marina. The city of Stockton is also embarking on new downtown
3 redevelopment. Mr. Rhea stated to me that “nobody wants to Visit Stockton surrounded by polluted
4 waterways.” (RTD-405.)

5 28. Along the Stockton Deep Water Ship Channel is the Stockton Marina, a new water
6 amenity in the city, where visitors may anchor for a while at guest docks or consider a long term
7 berth. Visitors from the entire San Joaquin Valley use the marina. From the marina, visitors step off
8 of their boats and stroll along the Joan Darrah Promenade where there is beautiful public art. They
9 can enjoy Stockton’s many downtown restaurants or get lodging at any of several downtown
10 Stockton hotels. There are many activities and resources along the Stockton Delta that include
11 dining , attractions, and boating services. Downtown is the gateway for Delta recreation. (RTD-405.)

12 29. In regard to agri-tourism, Mr. Rhea said that a whole week is devoted to the vast array
13 of gastronomic influences found only in Stockton. From the Great Stockton Asparagus Dine Out to
14 the Downtown Stockton Asian Farmer’s Market where visitors may purchase locally grown and
15 produced food items that are part of Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, Korean, Chinese, and Indian
16 cuisiene. Many of the markets’ venues serve foods from locally sourced specialties to create exotic
17 dishes and fare. (RTD-405; RTD-411.)

18 30. Mr. Rhea also stated that visitors also enjoy views of the California Delta from
19 restaurants located along nearby river channels such as Garlic Brothers
20 <http://www.garlicbrothersonline.com/>), Chitivas ([https://www.facebook.com/Chitivas-Salsa-Sports-
21 203369736372525/](https://www.facebook.com/Chitivas-Salsa-Sports-203369736372525/)), Bob’s Marina (<http://www.bobsatthemarina.com/>), and Nena’s :
22 <http://www.nenasmexicanrestaurant.com/>). (RTD-405.)

23 31. Mr. Rhea stated that visitors can also enjoy a Delta cruise. However, with the Tunnels
24 project he said that “outstanding recreational opportunities” will cease to exist with an infestation of
25 toxic algal blooms and water hyacinth. (RTD-405.)

26 32. Rhea also said he is very concerned that the Delta tunnels would harm a myriad of
27 water users, fisheries, and species due to degraded water quality. The tunnels, he said, will weaken
28 our local tourism economy which depends on healthy water ways. (RTD-405.) He stated that what

1 tunnels proponents call water supply reliability is really giving people in other parts of California the
2 good water quality, while destroying water quality for Stockton. Diverting the Sacramento River
3 leaves a greater concentration of the San Joaquin River water in the Delta—that's polluted water,
4 loaded with selenium, boron, bromides, and salt, he added. (RTD-405.)

5 CONCLUSION

6 33. Community organizations like Puentes, In Season, BUFA, farmers' markets around
7 San Joaquin County, and other urban agricultural small businesses exist in part to help serve
8 previously underserved environmental justice communities with healthier and more affordable food
9 options in greater Stockton. They do so by engaging members of environmental justice communities
10 in direct cultivation of affordable and healthful crops, as at PUENTES and BUFA. Restaurants
11 committed to local sourcing of ingredients for their menus or of wines for their wine offerings source
12 from Delta farms, vineyards, and wineries which employ members of environmental justice
13 communities. Still other tech businesses, like eBeer, rely in part on the maintenance and
14 improvement of Delta water quality to help attract customers to a desirable city for demonstration
15 and marketing of their beer tap systems. Simply put, nobody wants to visit or do business in a city
16 surrounded by stagnant, polluted water that smells. Stockton already has that problem due to
17 inadequate fresh water flows. CA WaterFix will make these problems worse. The stories of these
18 businesses help document and illustrate the linkages between the Stockton's prime economic driver,
19 agriculture, and future economic growth strategies, many of which will depend directly or indirectly
20 on maintaining and improving water quality in the Delta estuary.

21
22 Dated: August 29, 2016


23 ESPERANZA VIELMA
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