CalWA
CALIFORNIA WATER ALLIANCE
PO Box 1267 | Hanford, CA | 93232
P: 866.875.2533
www.CaliforniaWaterAlliance.org

June 9, 2015

Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814
FAX: 916-558-3160

RE: Sacramento River Temperature Plan

Dear Governor Brown:

Planning for the management of water temperature in the Sacramento River, since its inception, has been a collaboration between expert scientists, regulators, operators, districts and stakeholders.

Their process resulted in the proposed Sacramento River Temperature Control Plan, which was approved on May 16 of this year. Despite the combined expertise behind this proposal, executive director Tom Howard unilaterally rescinded that approval on May 29.

California farmers and community water providers unanimously relied on the approved Temperature Control Plan as the basis for moving forward with their food and fiber production plans and water conservation efforts. Californians were led to believe the May 16 plan had already addressed the needs of salmon and the Sacramento River would be maintained at temperatures cooler than 60°F.

This reversal in the plan places much more in jeopardy than just temperature and fish survival. Abandoning the previously agreed upon summer water management plan handcuffs water and community leaders statewide; it limits their ability to provide essential services for their communities already making sacrifices through this drought crisis. Stopping releases from Lake Shasta means less water will flow into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, potentially denying water to 70 percent of California's urban population and sacrificing water quality for the Delta and parts of the Bay Area. Farmers throughout California have already committed to their crops and cancellation means potential ruin for thousands of families.

The cost of this arbitrary change of direction could run to hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars, a crippling and long-term blow to California's agricultural economy.

As a result of rescinding the Temperature Control Plan, reservoirs from Oroville to New Melones are now forced to release water previously held for summer urban, farm, and environmental use; this will allow it to flow unrestricted to San Francisco Bay and out to the ocean in order to meet salinity and water quality requirements.

Regardless of Delta pumping operations, whenever Shasta water is withheld, these other reservoirs will be forced to make comparable releases to meet competing mandates. This drastically impacts the areas those reservoirs serve, rapidly depletes regional water supplies and endangers the economies and public health of millions of people from Redding to Bakersfield, and even beyond to that vast majority of Californians that live in Southern California and depend on pure snowmelt water to mix with their other water supplies to meet water quality standards.

We urge the SWRCB to work with a willing body of stakeholders and heed the scientific advice of its experts on managing release flows from Lake Shasta and other project reservoirs so as to achieve the proper balance between endangered species protection and the needs of California's population and farms during this statewide crisis.

Doing so will allow the SWRCB to begin unwinding the tangled web of regulatory mandates and conflicting orders before fish and people are irreparably harmed.

We believe that this is properly a decision that must be made in consultation with the stakeholder working group and experts, not something the SWRCB's executive director should independently decide. To allow him to do so would appear arbitrary and would ignore the hard work of many dedicated and involved stakeholders with far greater understanding and expertise on the issues in question.

Thank you for your consideration of our request for immediate action to reverse or negotiate an acceptable alternative to the Sacramento River temperature control decision.

Sincerely,

Aubrey J. D. Bettencourt

Executive Director

California Water Alliance

cc: Felicia Marcus, Chairperson, State Water Resources Control Board

Tom Howard, Executive Director, State Water Resources Control Board