



Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center
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Public Comment
Statewide Water Quality Standards Variance Policy
Deadline: 2/3/17 12 noon

February 3, 2017

Jeanine Townsend
Clerk to the Board, State Water Resources Control Board



At this time, our Center, the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center, is submitting brief comments regarding the Statewide Water Quality Standards Variance policy. We will submit more detailed comments as the process moves forward. Please accept the following scoping comments submitted by our Center regarding the proposed Variance Policy.

When analyzing the impacts of the proposed variance policy, the board should consider the following:

- Impacts to suitable and critical habitat for listed species
- Recreational impacts
- Impacts to fish and wildlife

Section 110. (g) outlines six factors that may be used to justify the appropriateness of a variance. Our Center requests that language within this section be more specifically defined. For example, the sixth factor provides a caveat when “Controls more stringent than those required by sections 301(b) and 306 of the Clean Water Act would result in substantial and widespread economic and social impact.” The terms substantial and widespread are subject to interpretation and should require thorough evidence and justification. The CVRWQCB’s variance policy includes additional considerations the board may make when make a determination based on factor 6. Despite having 5 distinct considerations, this policy still does not address the interpretation of substantial and widespread social and economic impact.

The proposed language is broad and non-regulatory; our Center generally does not oppose what is currently being proposed, given the expectation that more substantive language will be provided and available for comment at the regional level. We also anticipate opportunities to comment on proposals related to bacteria objectives that we are under the impression will arise later on in this process.

Megan Fiske, biologist

Meg Layhee, biologist