



From: Barbara Swier  
To: [commentletters](#)  
Subject: Please read.  
Date: Monday, January 16, 2017 9:01:46 PM

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My name is Barbara Swier, and I am a native Californian, a retired teacher, and someone who most people would consider an environmentalist. You might assume that as an environmentalist I would be most concerned with water that would benefit salmon. But this would be an inaccurate assumption. The plan for taking more water and shipping it down south, while supposedly helping salmon, has been based on faulty science. Here's what I believe you should think about. Before the dams were built in the Sierra Nevada Mountains to control the rivers, my grandfather needed a boat to get from Ripon (where he lived) to Salida. As I have often explained to my junior high students, the rivers they see year round as they travel from place to place in the valley are not natural occurrences. The fact that they basically look the same all year was not the way it was before the dams. Now think about this: Before the dams, when the snow melted in the Sierras as it warmed in the spring, the rivers flooded their banks. Many parts of the valley were akin to swamps. Then as the snow disappeared during the summer, less and less water flowed down into the valley's rivers. By the time autumn rolled around, those rivers were SMALL, SHALLOW, WARM STREAMS. And during the fall, millions upon millions of salmon came up those rivers to spawn. My father says that as kids, the salmon were so prolific that were one able to do so, one could walk across the river on the backs of salmon. SO.....why is it that you are being fed a line about salmon needing HUGE amounts of COLD water in order to come up river in the fall to spawn?

Last year, we decided to see what the Salmon Festival was all about in Knights Ferry. I noticed a ranger along the bank of the Stanislaus River in his uniform teaching residents about the salmon. When he had a moment alone, I posed this question to him. Why did millions of salmon come up the warm shallow streams in the fall in the past, and now we're told they need massive amounts of deep cold water to do so. His response? "That's what we'd like to know. We have been trying to explain that to the feds for years, and they simply won't listen. Science doesn't support what they are forcing us to do."

So it would seem that big money in Southern California, along with support in high places has no interest in the salmon. This is a water grab, pure and simple. Farmers in this valley poured blood, sweat and tears into creating irrigation systems, including the dams. Those residents of this state who are in the direct path or alongside the rivers should have the rights to those rivers. If parts of the south do not have that water because they are not in the path or alongside rivers, they should be part of a desalination plan. Even Saudi Arabia desalinates most of their water, and it's solar-powered! Would it be expensive? Yes, but losing billions of dollars in agricultural profits, jobs, etc. is also extremely expensive. Stanislaus County alone would lose billions of dollars. The numbers you have been given about monetary losses by the agricultural communities is NOT accurate. Those pushing this idea of taking more river water don't want you to know the true costs to the valley.

It would do you well, if you honestly want to do the right thing, instead of bowing to pressure from the southern part of this state, to REALLY look at the scientific research that has been done at great cost by the irrigation districts and by people who have studied this for years. California's ground water is at stake. As the only state in the union to not regulate ground water (idiotic), we cannot afford to take more water from the rivers. This will force farmers and cities to have to pull more from the aquifers, and subsidence will be the result. The southwestern part of the state near Fresno has already seen what that can do. So they scream for more water from the north. They should be thankful for the Delta Mendota built when I was a kid. But they have overfarmed and overbuilt for the amount of water they have had. When does it stop? Stop pretending this is about fish. We know better. Big money equates to big power. Are you strong enough and ethical enough to do what's right? That seems to be the question. Surprise us by doing the right thing. No more water shipped south. No more water to the delta under the false guise of helping fish that don't need cold or deep water. And no more talk about forty-foot diameter tunnels under the delta so that the Sacramento River can be shipped south. Hopefully you do know that the Sacramento River carries more salmon than all the other rivers. So tell us again how this is about salmon.

Get rid of predatory fish. Sports fishermen throughout our family will tell you there are other fish in the waters that don't swallow whole salmon fry the way the big mouth bass do. As much as I have supported Governor Brown, having voted for him each time, I am disheartened to the point of anger to see him bend to his buddies in the south.

Listen to the honest science. Do the right thing. Leave the rivers alone. Desalinate along the coast of California in half a dozen strategic spots, and show the rest of the world we are truly leaders.

Thanks so much,  
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