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California State Senate

SENATOR
CATHLEEN GALGIANI
FIFTH SENATE DISTRICT



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December 16, 2016

Chairwoman Felicia Marcus
and
State Water Resources Control Board Members
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95812



Public Comment
2016 Bay-Delta Plan Amendment & SED
Deadline: 1/17/17 12:00 noon



RE: Bay-Delta Supplemental Environmental Document – SWRCB Hearings

Dear Chairwoman Marcus and Board Members:

I have serious reservations regarding the Bay-Delta SED released in September. My first concern was with the public comment process for a proposal with such serious impacts to the areas involved. Although I appreciate the 60 day extension to the original 60 day comment period, I do not believe it adequate for the affected parties to thoroughly review and respond to a complex 4,000 page report compiled over 4 years suggesting a significant reallocation of water from the three rivers that will have dire impacts on the three county area and beyond.

Studies and estimates by local economists and water and agriculture agencies clearly suggest that the assumptions in the SED in regard to the impacts on the local economy, groundwater, drinking water and agricultural production are greatly under estimated. Most experts suggest that the potential for increase in the salmon population may be very minimal and is very speculative.

The SED acknowledges that the region would have to make up the loss of surface water by increased pumping of groundwater. This directly contradicts the goals of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act process by reducing irrigation water which is the largest recharge factor in this area which already has some significantly over drafted basins.

The SED suggests no forms of mitigation for these economic and groundwater impacts but merely states that **“the impact will be significant but unavoidable.”** This is a less than acceptable response to these three counties which have not yet recovered from the economic downturn, has been one of the most impacted areas in the country by the mortgage crisis and has been weathering an historic drought.

I have proposed for years that California needs a comprehensive and consistent approach to water planning taking into account all projects in development and all proposed projects, large and small.

A plan that does not take into account 165 years of alterations to the Delta and the rivers that feed it as well as the introduction of invasive species and subsequent predation seems unlikely to succeed on its own without the expertise and assistance of our local water agencies. Even this Board recognized in 1995 that the health of the salmon rests on more than just increased flows allowing that actions on predation, hatcheries, ocean harvest and habitat are required.

A report released last year by four Delta lead scientists on the challenges and recommendations for managing the Delta, stated:

"If the problem were just about allocating fresh flows, it might be solvable. Add in the complexity of moving water through a hydrodynamically complex Delta, it becomes complicated. Add the uncertainty of ecological response and the institutional complexity of many actors with many visions and the problem becomes wicked. Then add the ever changing water supply and ecological and economic contexts within which decisions must be made and the problem becomes devilishly wicked."

The Water Board staff presentations to the Merced, Stanislaus and San Joaquin County Boards of Supervisors included a suggestion that the best approach would be to work with our water agencies to achieve the desired goals rather than spend years and monetary resources in litigation. The Merced Irrigation District has recently released their S.A.F.E. proposal which seems to be a step in this direction. I think this kind of a cooperative and comprehensive program with all parties working together would be a much more productive way to move toward the Boards goals.

I respectfully request that the Board concentrate its efforts in this direction.

Sincerely,



Cathleen Galgiani
Senator, 5th District