

Jeanine Townsend, Clerk of the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814-0100



Dear Board:

I am a retired molecular biologist in cancer research and have lived in Livermore for 43 years. Now my major activities are supporting conservations groups and photographing birds in California and around the world. I am writing to help protect the home of the American Bittern in my photo above. As the West Coast's largest estuary, the Bay-Delta provides habitat for numerous birds and other species of wildlife. It is a major stopping point on the Pacific Flyway and also acts as a migration pathway for salmon, steelhead and sturgeon traveling to and from home streams to the Pacific Ocean. THIS VAST ESTUARY IS SLOWLY DYING BECAUSE OF INSUFFICIENT FLOW OF WATER.

As I scientist, I believe that a very minimum of half of the natural flow from the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Merced and lower San Joaquin Rivers should go into the Bay-Delta in order to reverse its decline. Evidence supporting this threshold comes from the 2010 State Water Board report titled *Development of Flow Criteria for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Ecosystem*, which determined that ~60% of unimpaired flow between February and June would adequately protect fish and wildlife in the lower San Joaquin River and its three major tributaries. THE CURRENT DAMAGE TO THE DELTA IS THE RESULT OF THE STATE NOT SETTING AND MEETING SUCH A TARGET.

Better management through efficient irrigation technologies and practices, and replacing lower-value, water-intensive crops with higher-value, water-efficient crops, is needed. Irrigation-intensive crops such as almonds, much of which are exported outside the U.S., are not the best or wisest use of our precious water resource. Agricultural exports often benefit corporations at the expense of small farmers or other beneficial uses. IT IS ESSENTIAL TO GIVE AS MUCH PRIORITY TO NATURE'S NEEDS AS TO THE ENTRENCHED POLITICAL FORCES THAT ARE STARVING OUR DELTA OF WATER.

Thank you,
Larry H. Thompson
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