

11/15/06 Bd Mtg
Shasta River
Deadline: 11/1/06 12 pm

Ad Hoc Committee

P.O. Box 484
Occidental, CA 95465
707 874-3855



1 of 2

State Water Resources Control Board
Sacramento, Ca

10/31/06

re: Comment Letter - Shasta River Watershed DO and Temperature TMDLs
Yes, increase flows now; Yes, decrease diversions now.

(by FAX to Song Her, Clerk to the Board (916) 341-5620 fax)

Dear SWRCB,

It is *essential* to maintain the numeric targets in the TMDLs. For years, the Shasta, as well as the other tributaries of the Klamath, have been declared "impaired" by the EPA due to low dissolved oxygen and high temperatures. In the Shasta, water can get so warm that it is actually lethal for salmon! This must *not* be allowed to continue! It is generally thought that extreme measures are needed to restore the Shasta. To the contrary, staff of the Regional board concluded that *modest* increases in flow will have dramatic effect. *Modest* increases in flow will take zones of the Shasta out of the deadly temperature range for salmon. Salmon are cold water fish and die when the water is too warm. They need cold water to thrive. We *must* lower the amount taken away.

Some ranchers and other irrigators think that they are doing a service by letting irrigation runoff return to the Shasta (tailwater return flow). They do not realize that the water that returns to the river has warmed up and is loaded with fertilizers and/or chemicals and nutrients that encourage growth of aquatic plants and other warm water life forms. The combination of reduced and slower flows, warm water and plant and algae growth are not compatible with salmon. The whole ecosystem changes. Parasites flourish where never before. *Salmon want cold, clear water and everything that goes with it.* Enhancing the Shasta flows with more cold clear and clean water is essential to restore the magnificent salmon runs our rivers once produced.

Furthermore, the Shasta is a tributary of the Klamath and the Klamath watershed is being used to regulate the entire commercial salmon fishing industry. The salmon fishing season for the entire west coast is determined by whether there are enough salmon returning to the *Klamath watershed* to spawn. Nevermind the high numbers of salmon in the Sacramento. With too few salmon in the *Klamath*, goodbye salmon season and hello skyrocketing prices for Alaska chinook. And we won't settle for the artificially dyed "farmed" fish as a substitute for the omega-3 rich wild salmon -- one of nature's most perfect foods!

Salmon cannot thrive with so little water left in tributaries like the Shasta and so much water diverted. Shasta "unimpaired" flow is about 350 cfs. The current baseline flow is a piddling 22 cfs. The Regional Board is asking for the dedicated cold water flow to be increased by only 45 cfs. We'd like to see much more, but 45 cfs additional is a start. Such a small increase *can* be

2 of 2

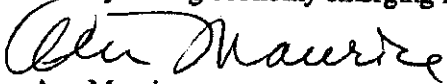
reasonably achieved. The Regional Board believes that this small increase in cold water flow would get rid of lethal zones and make the Shasta a healthier river for our *cold water fishery*.

Target numbers need to stay in the proposed amendment for all to see. They help frame the solution. It helps set a benchmark, a goal. 45 cfs is only about 14% of the total water diverted. Surely, a 14% savings in water withdrawals could be found.

It would be a disgrace to see commercial salmon fishing collapse in our time. Many say that parasites in the Klamath system are a major part of the problem. Parasites are the cause of high juvenile outmigrant mortality. These deadly parasites thrive in warm water. Increasing cold water flow can only help decrease the parasite population.

Please assist with answers to the following regarding water and flows in the Shasta watershed:

1. Is your staff personally familiar with conditions in the Shasta Basin? Have they been sent recently on a reconnaissance mission to understand the situation first hand?
2. What is irrigated? Alfalfa? Pasture? Potatoes? Other food crops? Are there financial incentives to raise non-irrigated crops; to purchase some alfalfa rather than divert so much water as to destroy the salmon industry?
3. What percentage is diverted for agriculture/ranching compared to urban use, towns and cities?
4. Are there irrigated lawns in subdivisions? Ornamental, non-recreational lawns in front of public buildings and offices? Lawns consume an enormous amount of water. Why not institute a "Cash For Grass" program like the one in Petaluma -- establish *financial incentives to get rid of lawns* and replace them with "xeriscape" (low water, native plant, or 'Mediterranean' landscaping).
5. Do any of the towns in the Shasta watershed *meter* water use?
6. Are any water users diverting more water than necessary because they are afraid if they don't use their water rights they will lose them?
7. Can't increased flow in the Shasta be accomplished through water conservation? Has the Board already got a water conservation program in schools, 4H clubs, after-school programs, YMCA, church groups, etc? Do you have speakers addressing Rotary? Lions? Do you have brochures and audio-visuals on salmon, fishing and "water conserving-salmon friendly-cattle ranching"?
8. Wouldn't there be great pride and sense of accomplishment to see healthier salmon runs and a healthy fishing economy emerging from enhancement of the Shasta watershed?


Ann Maurice