



County of Yolo

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Oscar Villegas
SUPERVISOR, FIRST DISTRICT

January 18, 2018

Hearing Officer Felicia Marcus
Hearing Officer Tam M. Doduc
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

Re: California WaterFix Change Petition—Policy Statement of Yolo County Supervisor
Oscar Villegas

Dear Hearing Officers Marcus and Doduc:

Thank you for the opportunity to present a policy statement regarding the California WaterFix. I submit this statement in my capacity as a member of the Yolo County Board of Supervisors and as the Supervisor representing most of the legal Delta within Yolo County, including the City of West Sacramento and the town of Clarksburg.

I recognize the difficulty of the task before you. In presiding over these hearings, you are at the very center of the economic, environmental, and political controversies that define modern water policy in California.

On one side of the controversy, some argue that the WaterFix will modernize the State Water Project and the Central Valley Project. They say the WaterFix will assure water supply reliability and that they need this project to safeguard their future—the future of their farmland, and the future of their communities.

Yet others argue this project is not necessary at all. They say it's a temporary lifeline—and a short one at best—for unsustainable farming and urban growth. And they emphasize that the cost of this lifeline may well be high indeed—further damage to the ecosystem, economy, and social fabric of the Delta, one of the truly special places in California.

Much about the WaterFix remains uncertain—whether it will be funded, and even what the project is. But for my constituents and others like them throughout the Delta, what is at stake is not uncertain. The stakes are high—they include the future of their communities, their farms, and a way of life that has existed for many generations.

Clarksburg and other Delta legacy communities are like nothing else in the state. Many of my constituents have been farming the same land and been part of the same community for up to six

generations. They are leaders in the Delta agricultural industry. They operate award-winning wineries and supply wine grapes to many others. They farm row crops and cultivate orchards, serve their communities, and occupy an increasingly rare place in California agriculture that deserves respect and protection.

Outside of this room, however, the WaterFix process has not given these individuals and their communities the respect or protection they deserve. They have farmed the same land for generation after generation, and for the past decade the WaterFix has turned their world upside down with little apparent regard for their concerns. And so they are coming before you—through their local governments, through community associations, and even as individuals—to present their concerns and hope that they will be heard.

I ask you to hear them out, and to give their concerns the respect and weight they deserve. This is both your opportunity and your responsibility as you deliberate whether public interest considerations balance in favor of this project.

I need not tell you how hollow it will be to simply say “I’m sorry” to fourth, fifth, or sixth-generation farmers across the Delta if the WaterFix proceeds and their concerns are realized. If you hold DWR to its task, you will not be in that position. For DWR will have persuaded you that the WaterFix—despite all the uncertainties about how it will be funded, how it will be built, and even what it will ultimately be—will not cause the serious harms to the Delta ecosystem, economy, or communities that so many fear.

In closing, I ask you to set the bar high for DWR—as high as what is at stake for the Delta—and hold it to the burden of meeting that bar. You have my appreciation and respect for your work in this proceeding. It is challenging, lengthy, and hard fought on all sides. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



OSCAR VILLEGAS

Yolo County Supervisor, District 1