

July 9, 2016

To: State Water Resources Control Board

Policy Statement from the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society, regarding the proposed new intakes and the California WaterFix.

The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society, charged with preserving the history and cultural heritage of the Sacramento River Delta, believes that construction of the WaterFix Conveyance would be extremely detrimental to the Delta and would destroy parts of the historical Delta which are irreplaceable. Some of our concerns are as follows:

The small towns spaced along the Sacramento River in the Delta are legacies of California's past, each distinctive with its own character and history. The historic buildings within these towns are treasures from the past, sometimes fragile and always vulnerable. Fire is always a concern; response time is critical. Massive tunnel construction with its attendant borrow/spoil and RTM areas, holding ponds, etc. would clog transportation routes in the Delta for years to come. The Sheriff's Department has said that roadway hazards, traffic control, and interference connected to WaterFix construction could significantly increase response time of emergency vehicles. This would put buildings (and lives) at risk.

The entire town of Locke is a National Historic Landmark, built of wood with buildings close together. Recently it suffered a fire. The firefighters did an outstanding job of getting the fire under control and confining it to one building. The outcome could have been very different if they had difficulty getting there in time. This is a cause for concern in Locke and every other part of the Delta, too.

Another concern is structural damage to historic buildings located anywhere near the enormous construction zones, caused by excessive vibrations from extensive pile-driving. Old buildings would be especially vulnerable to these vibrations. The WaterFix EIR states that the damage would be "significant and unavoidable." Added to this is the damage caused by an extensive "dewatering" process, which would lead to land subsidence and further degradation of vulnerable structures.

The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society is also concerned with the loss of beautiful historic views. In the 1920's, the Victory Highway Association chose a route paralleling the Sacramento River for part of a scenic trail dedicated to the American forces who died in WWI. It remained a lovely part of the Delta's heritage. In 1969, the route along Highway 160 which the Victory Highway followed was again singled out for its beauty, designated as a California Scenic Highway. Scenic Highways must include a "scenic corridor protection program" that limits development, outdoor advertising, and earth moving. Construction lasting nine or more years would forever alter this beautiful landscape from agricultural, rural residential, riparian or riverine settings to areas involving heavy construction equipment and activities that would permanently change the scenic quality of the area. This is another "significant and unavoidable" result of the WaterFix.

I would like to quote Gregory Kondos, the renowned landscape artist who has painted many beautiful scenes of the Sacramento River. In an interview in the Delta Voice Newsletter, summer 2014, Mr. Kondos said it is a "terrible idea" to destroy the Delta he loves. "Here we have something very unique and special," he said. "Would you use Yosemite as a dump, just because it is big and deep and can hold a lot of trash? No, someone has said that's off limits, and everyone accepts that. Well, that's how people who know the Delta feel about it, too." How sad it would be if, in future years, Mr. Kondos' paintings were windows into a beautiful past that no longer existed.

Sincerely,

John B. Stutz, Vice-President  
Sacramento River Delta Historical Society  
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