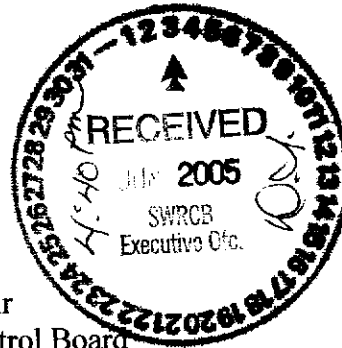




American Fisheries Society

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June 3, 2005

Arthur G. Baggett, Jr., Chair
State Water Resources Control Board
P. O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

RE: PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE 1995 WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN FOR
THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY/SACRAMENTO-SAN JOAQUIN DELTA ESTUARY

Dear Chairman Baggett,

The California-Nevada Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (Chapter) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the State Water Resources Control Board's (SWRCB) review of the 1995 Water Quality Control Plan (WQCP) for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (Bay/Delta). The Chapter, through education, outreach, and technical analysis and review, works to promote science-based conservation and sustainable management of fisheries resources and aquatic ecosystems. Many Chapter members, working as professional fisheries scientists and resource managers in the estuary and its watershed, have observed, and in some cases participated in the implementation of the WQCP during the past ten years, as well as in the ongoing review of a number of the plan's key protections for fish and wildlife beneficial uses. In this letter, we provide their summarized analyses and interpretations of the information and materials presented to the SWRCB, along with broad recommendations regarding some of the present water quality objectives.

During the years since the WQCP was implemented, baseline and special monitoring programs have collected vast amounts of information on fish, water quality, and ecosystem conditions, providing essential insights and new perspectives on physical and ecological function of the Bay/Delta system. The Chapter's analysis of actual Bay/Delta conditions indicates that, despite generally consistent compliance with WQCP objectives, most indicators point to the need for increased protection for aquatic resources in the Bay/Delta. The Chapter therefore offers the following more specific comments for the SWRCB's consideration:

- **Baseline Monitoring Program.** Regular monitoring of physical conditions (e.g., water quality, flows) and biological resources (e.g., fish populations and distributions) is essential to manage compliance with the WQCP objectives and to evaluate their efficacy

for fish and wildlife (and other) beneficial uses. Over the last decade, state and federal agencies managing Bay/Delta monitoring programs through the Interagency Ecological Program have gained substantial experience with and accumulated large amounts of data on status and trends for water quality and biological resources of the estuary. Interagency coordination on monitoring and scientific issues, particularly through the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, has continued to improve. We recommend that the SWRCB support continuation and/or expansion of present monitoring programs.

- **Narrative Salmon Objective.** Despite funding limitations and incomplete implementation of planned ecosystem restoration and fish protection programs, state and federal fishery agencies have made some progress in implementing the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) objective to increase natural production of Chinook salmon and other anadromous fish species in the Central Valley. However, information presented to the SWRCB clearly indicates that progress towards achieving the CVPIA goals, as well as the WQCP's narrative salmon protection objective, has been uneven, with some runs and/or species (e.g., San Joaquin basin Chinook salmon and Central Valley steelhead) showing little or no improvement. This suggests that additional measures to improve habitat conditions and survival, including enhanced protections in the Bay/Delta, are needed. We also recommend that the present narrative objective be converted to a numeric objective and suggest that the SWRCB adopt the quantitative methods being developed by the Department of Interior (DOI) for determining progress toward the CVPIA's "doubling goal".

- **San Joaquin River Flow Objective.** In the last two years, the water project agencies have, with the consent of the fishery agencies, failed to fully implement this objective in order to conserve reservoir water supplies during dry hydrologic conditions, to the apparent detriment of San Joaquin basin Chinook salmon populations and estuarine habitat conditions and species. While the DOI has proposed a plan to "flexibly" implement these objectives, we recommend that the SWRCB instead consider options that would maximize protection for the fish and wildlife beneficial uses and limit flexibility in implementation of this objective.

The expert review and analyses of these (and related) issues provided to us by our members confirm that water removal from the Bay/Delta system and the substantial alteration of flows in the watershed have had, and continue to have, significant impacts on regional fisheries resources and their habitats. Based on this, as well as recent status and trends of Bay/Delta fish and habitat conditions, the Chapter recommends that the SWRCB consider strengthening WQCP objectives for fish and wildlife beneficial uses. Further, absent review by independent scientists to evaluate direct and indirect impacts on fisheries and ecosystems, any proposals to increase these impacts, including actions to "flex" present WQCP objectives (e.g., Delta outflow, and Sacramento and San Joaquin River flow objectives) should be rejected by the SWRCB.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide review and comments on these proceedings. We remain ready to assist the Board in any way it may deem appropriate. For further information, please contact me at (916) 651-9618, tfrink@water.ca.gov, or by regular mail: P.O. Box 942836, Sacramento, CA 94236-0001.

Sincerely,



Ted Frink
Chair, Conservation Committee
California-Nevada Chapter, American Fisheries Society

cc: California-Nevada Chapter Executive Committee