

Before the
State Water Resources Control Board

In the Matter of the Proposed Revocation of Water Right Permits Nos. 16209, 16210, 16211 and 16212 (Applications 18721, 18723, 21636 and 21637) of the United States Bureau of Reclamation	Policy Statement of Placer County Water Agency
--	--

Placer County Water Agency (“PCWA” or “the Agency”) appreciates the opportunity to provide this policy statement to the State Water Resources Control Board (“Board”) in response to the Notice, dated April 28, 2008, concerning the potential revocation of the Bureau of Reclamation’s water right permits for the Auburn Dam Project. While PCWA takes no position concerning whether the Auburn Dam permits should be revoked, it does have a strong interest in protecting and preserving, for the benefit of the region, the water resources that are the subject of those permits if they are revoked.

Placer County Water Agency is a county-wide agency created by the California State Legislature in 1957 in special legislation entitled the "Placer County Water Agency Act." PCWA carries out a broad range of responsibilities including water resource planning and management, retail and wholesale supply of irrigation and drinking water and production of hydroelectric energy.

When the Bureau of Reclamation’s Auburn Dam water right applications were first being considered by the State Water Resources Control Board, this Board had to consider the impact of the Auburn Dam Project on the water needs of the local region. The State of California had previously filed water right Applications 7936 and 7937 to preserve American River water for the benefit of the people of the region. Application 7937 was for 831,000 afa of storage for consumptive uses within the American River watershed. In the hearings on the Bureau’s water right applications – the same applications now before the Board -- the Bureau asked this Board to release the priority represented by those state filings (Applications 7936 and 7937) – to subordinate those state filings – to its Auburn Dam Project water right permits. In those hearings, PCWA sought assurance from

this Board that the needs of the residents of Placer County would not be jeopardized by the Auburn Dam Project water rights.

Your Decision 1356 on the Bureau's applications for the release from priority of Applications 7936 and 7937 found, at that time, that granting the Bureau of Reclamation priority over the state filings would not deprive the counties in the region of water needed for future development. In particular, the Board noted that Placer County Water Agency had already contracted for "as much water as it would need in the foreseeable future" when it executed an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation for 117,000 acre-feet of water annually, and that other water agencies in the area were negotiating for similar contracts. Decision 1356 also noted that there were other water sources available to meet future needs of the local counties, and that conditions would be inserted in the Bureau's permits that protected the counties and watershed of origin.

Now, in 2008, the water supply outlook has changed. There are currently unmet and underserved needs in those counties and in the American River watershed. The American River watershed region has experienced tremendous growth; the needs of the populace have become more urgent, and both water reliability and sources of supply have diminished. For example, we would particularly note that Central Valley Project contractors on the American River system have had their allocations of municipal water supplies cut 25% this year based upon statewide supply and demand considerations even though local hydrologic conditions would not require such cutbacks.

If this Board determines that the Bureau's water right permits are to be revoked, the water under those permits will revert to unappropriated water. PCWA supports reserving for beneficial uses within the counties in which the American River originates the right to develop any unappropriated American River water to meet present and future area of origin demands. Accordingly, Placer County Water Agency requests that you again consider and again protect and preserve American River water for the benefit of the local American River water purveyors, as the Board did in 1970 in D-1356.