



I just read with alarm an article in my local paper as well as the Merced County Farm Bureau newsletter on this issue. Rather than forward to you the proposed letter from my irrigation provider, Merced Irrigation District, I would rather give you my concerns in my own voice. I purchased a 35 acre almond ranch south west of Atwater over 10 years ago. We thought this would provide us an income opportunity to supplement my retirement. That is one of the reasons that this proposal by the water board is so troubling. This action by your board will result in reduced water deliveries via my irrigation district. This will require my pumping of scarce groundwater to maintain my investment and protect my future income. This flies in the face of evidence that overdraft of our aquifers is one of the chief issues facing water managers. The best local science tells us that surface water is the best way to avoid poisoning the soil with dissolved salts.

It is most troubling to watch the video of the Fish and Wildlife manager. He states that they really don't know what the result of this diversion will provide, but they have to do it. This tells me that this diversion is speculative, however if the anticipated resurgence of the salmon population does not occur, the water diversions would most likely remain in perpetuity. This proposal is but another example of protecting wildlife without any consideration of the costs. One thinks of the fairy shrimp habitat issue that was used to attempt to block the construction of the UC Merced Campus. The scientists claimed they were endangered, yet everywhere they looked they seem to find them.

The fact that the Hetch Hetchy Water system is excluded from this diversion requirement is evidence that this is a political strategy. It is obvious that proposing to divert San Francisco's water would incur the wrath of the very powerful bay area constituencies. I strongly encourage the board to deny this water diversion. The economic impacts to the farming community are too great to ignore.

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