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Assembly California Legislature



TONY THURMOND
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, FIFTEENTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES
BUDGET
EDUCATION
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LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

SUB COMMITTEES
CHAIR: BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 1
ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 6 ON
BUDGET PROCESS OVERSIGHT AND
PROGRAM EVALUATION

January 30, 2017

Felicia Marcus, Chair
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

RE: STRENGTHEN PROPOSED SAN JOAQUIN RIVER INFLOW REQUIREMENTS
TO RESTORE FISHERIES AND WATER QUALITY IN THE SAN FRANCISCO
BAY-DELTA ESTUARY

Dear Chairwoman Marcus:

As the Assemblymember representing the East Bay cities from Hercules to north Oakland and a member of the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee, I am deeply interested in and supportive of the State Water Resources Control Board's efforts to adopt new water quality standards for the great San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary. The health and productivity of the Bay ecosystem is vitally important to Bay Area residents, who depend on it for jobs, sustenance, recreation and an unrivalled quality of life.

I commend the Board's efforts, in preparing to adopt the first of these new standards (which would set minimum requirements for the amount of inflow from the rivers of the San Joaquin basin), to seek a better balance between the many competing uses of the public's water resources. Only a third or less of the natural runoff from these rivers now reaches the estuary, with catastrophic results for fisheries and water quality. The once great salmon runs of the San Joaquin River system have been destroyed or severely impacted, contributing to historic closures of the Pacific Coast salmon fishery. This has had devastating impacts to thousands of men and women whose livelihood directly depends on that fishery and has harmed many more in the seafood industry and those who consume its products. The drastic reduction in inflow also means that downstream water quality in the estuary continues to deteriorate, resulting in more frequent toxic algal blooms and higher pollutant concentrations, increasing the risk of exposure to contaminants for those who rely on the estuary for subsistence fishing and recreation.

The Board's final decision should be based on the best available science, ensure that enough water reaches the estuary to reverse these trends and protect the beneficial uses of water as required by state and federal law, and provide adequate protection for our Bay Area and coastal fishing communities, recreation, water quality, and the wildlife of our great San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary.

My constituents care deeply about the health of the Bay estuary. Earlier this year, over two-thirds of the voters in the nine-county Bay Area approved a measure to tax



themselves to support restoration of the Bay's wetlands. During every drought period in the past few decades, Bay Area residents have stepped up to reduce water consumption significantly. Much of the Bay Area's water supply is imported from the Bay's watershed, and we know that many water conservation and management tools are available to meet our region's water supply needs while ensuring sufficient flow to keep our rivers and the Bay estuary healthy. Our region is willing to do its fair share to make this happen, and we expect everyone in the watershed to do their fair share as well.

I urge you to revise your proposed water quality standards for San Joaquin flows to the estuary in order to fully protect our fisheries and water quality, and look forward to the Board's timely adoption of additional standards that ensure sufficient flow to San Francisco Bay over the next two years.

Sincerely,



Tony Thurmond
Assemblymember 15th Assembly District

Cc: State Water Resources Control Board Members
c/o Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board