

Letter of Support for Increased Fresh Water Flows into the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary

The San Francisco Bay-Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta system is the largest estuary on the U.S. Pacific Coast. It has been designated a site of Hemispheric Importance by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, is part of UNESCO's Golden Gate Biosphere Reserve, and is under international treaty protection under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. For Bay Area residents, the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary is not only a beautiful natural resource, it epitomizes everything that makes the Bay Area a wonderful place to live. The estuary unites residents in the many cities and counties around this region with a common identity. This ecosystem sustains not only the fish and wildlife that depend on it but is a major driver of the economy of our region and by extension California and the nation.

The Bay-Delta Estuary is a public trust resource that offers beneficial uses for all: clean water for boating, swimming, and drinking; productive commercial and sport fisheries; beautiful vistas; and healthy plants and animals. But for the past decade and more, the San Francisco Bay-Delta system has been in a state of chronic drought. Increasing amounts of fresh water have been diverted from the rivers and streams that feed the estuary, creating a disruptive imbalance in the amount of fresh and salt water. Although millions of dollars have been invested to clean up the Bay-Delta system and restore habitat, fish species are continuing to decline rapidly, including commercially important and endangered species such as salmon, sturgeon, and smelt. Yet, despite the critical need for adequate flows, less than half of the freshwater that would naturally drain into the Bay-Delta system has reached the Pacific Ocean in recent years.

In order to meet California's co-equal goals of a restored and protected ecosystem along with a reliable water supply, adequate freshwater flows through the Bay-Delta Estuary must be maintained. A variety of solutions exist to meet current and future human water needs, but our estuarine ecosystem needs water to prevent devastating loss. We cannot fail to protect this remarkable resource with which we have been entrusted.

This is about saving the Bay all over again—and the Bay cannot be saved without fresh water.

The health of both our economy and our ecosystem depends on adequate freshwater flows. I, _____, stand with Friends of the San Francisco Estuary in demanding a better balance between fresh water and ocean water in the San Francisco Bay-Delta. A flourishing San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary is the heart of this world-class destination we call home. I urge decision makers in our state agencies and in the legislature to take action now to protect the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary, a truly national and global treasure.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Address: _____