

January 10, 2006

California Department of Water Resources
1416 9th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Attention: Mr. Paul Marshall

RE: Effect on Rivers End Marina by the South Delta Improvements Program

Delta in Decline

California water is facing a crisis as the Delta ecosystem crashes and the program set up to manage it teeters on the brink of failure. The delicate balancing act, affecting the entire state was explored in a six-part series in The Times.

I am sure you have read and heard these before, however I have taken the time to pick out several points that raise questions to the overall effect of the proposed project. I understand that this is a water resource issue and sacrificing the South Delta and a few marinas may be a small price to be paid in the scheme of things. However, we have put a lot of effort in improving Rivers End Marina over the last five years and are just now seeing profits from our efforts. I talked with Terry who owns Tracy Oasis Marina and he told me that a study has been made on the effect of the temporary barriers on his business and it showed that his business has declined by 50%. Moving the Grantline barrier to the new proposed location will reduce the usable area for boating and fishing. Even according to the ten year old survey shown on Table 7.4.2 in the EIS/EIR 126 to 188 boats per day use West Grant Line Canal. This will cause over crowding of the other local waterways and will discourage numerous boaters and fishermen from launching at our marina. Alternative 3B would have the least effect on both Rivers End Marina and Tracy Oasis Marina for the recreational boater, not knowing the impact on the fish population and the effect on the number of fishermen using our marinas.

The other problem the barriers cause is water hyacinths and other debris get trapped when the barriers are closed. All this debris is drawn to our area by the pumps and fish screens when the barriers are removed. Even when a 24-hour effort is made to remove this debris the entrance to the marina gets choked for several days and the river is hazardous to navigation.

In addition, for the 30 years I have been coming to the Delta (I owned a house at the Livermore Yacht Club for 25 of those years) it obviously showed the effects of the pumps and the fish screens on the marina and adjacent areas. Silting has raised the bottom of the Delta in our area to a point that the weeds have taken over and areas are not navigable. If the dredging that was done in 2002 had not been completed I am sure that at low tide Rivers End Marina would be a mud flat. We need to know how often maintenance dredging is proposed for keeping the waterways open to the marina? I am sure that when boats at the guest docks were sitting in mud and other boats just trying to pass each other were churning through mud it discouraged people from using the marina. We can't ask our current customers to return if that becomes the condition in the future.

Our business relies on navigable water for the recreational boater, Black Bass, Catfish and the Striped Bass population is the mainstay for the fishermen who launch with us. The project only seems to address the Chinook salmon and as you can see by the articles excerpted below which document dramatic changes have occurred for a wide variety of fish species already. If these are significantly impacted by the proposed South Delta Project and the future proposed increase in pumping then Rivers End Marina and the South Delta will have become just collateral damage.

I have maintained detailed daily, weekly and monthly records of revenue so we could see the improvement since we took over. A business evaluation has just been completed in December 2005 to secure bank financing. Our desire is to protect the investment that our hard work has built.

I have reviewed the EIR/EIS as it pertains to marinas in The South Delta Improvements Project area. Under the section Environmental Commitments states, "These commitments will be incorporated into the project and include coordination with marinas and other recreational facilities." It states on page 1-30, "DWR is currently working directly with marinas that may be affected by the permanent gates." To date there has been no contact with DWR and Rivers End Marina regarding the affect of permanent gates. I refer to page 2-48 of the EIS/EIR which states, "If any marinas in the area are adversely affected by the permanent gates, DWR and Reclamation will work with the marina owner(s) to reduce those adverse effects." We would like to have further dialog with the Department of Water Resources to understand how this will be accomplished.

Excerpts from The Times articles:

Can the Delta reliably convey water from Northern California to points south?

The original Peripheral Canal would have been capable, at times, of drying up California's largest river.

But even a smaller diversion would raise serious concerns in Contra Costa because the Delta's water quality would deteriorate further and could conceivably force the Contra Costa Water District to desalinate its water.

The district, which serves 500,000 residents, has already spent hundreds of millions of dollars in the last decade to counter the continued degradation of the Delta's water quality.

The prospect of spending even more – and sending more water to Southern California – will set off a lively debate, predicted water district assistant general manager Greg Gartrell.

Most urgently, the Delta ecosystem is on the brink of collapse. Delta smelt, the key indicator of the Delta's overall health, is sliding toward extinction with alarming rapidity.

In October, a state appeals court undercut the very foundation of CalFed, saying the environmental impact report that laid out the program failed to consider whether Southern California could get by with less Delta water, among other shortcomings.

Delta water contains sea salts, algae and dissolved organic matter, which tasters like Kent Nelson pick up in odors they describe with words like "musty" or "marshy."

As a result, Contra Costa Water District officials say Delta water is now saltier in the fall, a critical time of year because that is normally when the Delta is at its saltiest.

It's not just salty or earthy-tasting water at stake. CalFed's inattention to water quality may also have prevented the program from detecting – even predicting – the three-year collapse in Delta fish populations confirmed early this year.

A saltier Delta could mean more clams and less food for the fish.

Another possibility is that the saltier water is encouraging the fish to swim upstream, where they are more likely to stray into the pumps' flows or be exposed to pesticides in farm runoff.

"It (poor water quality) complicates the disinfection process," said Greg Gartrell, Contra Costa Water District assistant general manager.

Like the 5 million fish "salvaged" here each year as part of the state system to deliver trillions of gallons of water to Southern California, these small striped bass, shad and other species were diverted through a system of screens and pipes to a pair of warehouse-like buildings on a windy plain below Altamont Pass.

Millions of fish probably don't survive the ordeal of being salvaged, they contend, and innumerable eggs, fish larvae and food sources too small to be captured by the screens are destroyed at the pumps.

Contra Costa Water District, along with scientists from other agencies, has found that salinity in the Delta has increased during the fall during the past 10 years. That might be contributing to the spread of clams, which in turn could be wiping out the food supply for young fish.

Theory No. 2 says that a move about 10 years ago to protect Delta fish by shifting the timing of water pumping from spring to fall and winter might have had the unintended effect of killing large numbers of fish.

Invasive species, including zooplankton and weeds are slowing down water and changing habitat for Delta fish.

For decades, anglers and environmentalists worried about Delta fisheries have suspected that an enormous toll was being exacted by the state-owned pumps here and smaller federal pumps down the road.

"I think the problem is they pump so much water out of the Delta, they pump all the food out with it," said Joe Horn, a bass fisherman who has plied Delta waters for 50 years.

Invasive species of clams, weeds and fish are markedly changing the Delta in unpredictable ways, and little is known about pesticides and other toxic compounds in the Delta.

Pumping has been relatively high in recent years. In 2000, the year the CalFed program was signed, the annual state and federal water deliveries from the south Delta topped 6 million acre-feet for the first time. Deliveries have topped that threshold three times since then.

The fish crash "raised questions about the effectiveness and prudence of some CalFed activities," according to a recent performance review by the state Department of Finance.

The uproarious eruption of spawning stripers on the San Joaquin is now just a memory residing in the minds of a few long time anglers. For Jay Sorensen and many others, the culprit is obvious. Massive pumps that deliver water to the

San Joaquin Valley and Southern California were cranking up about that time the stripers were falling off. "I always thought this was my Sistine Chapel out here," said Sorensen.

Environmentalists, however, say CalFed already is allowing more water to be pumped out of the Delta than ever before.

It is the heart of a vast, aqueous circulation system that moves water from Northern California – where 75 percent of the available water is – to the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California, where 80 percent of the demand is.

Environmental Defense has compiled figures to show that 6.4 million acre-feet were pumped out of the Delta this year, a record high set in the middle of a major fish crisis. Three of the four highest rates of pumping in the Delta have occurred in the past four years, according to the national environmental organization, which has offices in Oakland.

Environmentalists, Delta farmers and anglers are mistrustful of that plan, however; and say the Delta's recent woes could be caused, at least in part, by pumping. Therefore, it would be irresponsible to move forward with the relaxation on pumping limits now, they say.