

I am writing to advise you of my serious concern for the welfare of the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary and the fisheries that depend upon it for survival. As you may know, the productivity of a significant part of the foodweb in the Delta has collapsed according to agency scientists with the Interagency Ecological Program (IEP). Delta populations of important plankton and shrimp that help fuel the foodweb and drive the system's ecology have disappeared, as have many other important species including Delta smelt, longfin smelt, threadfin shad and young-of-the-year striped bass. Recently the Dept of Fish and Game has sounded the alarm over a dramatic drop in the sturgeon population.

The estuary that once sustained multiple runs of salmon and abundant runs striped bass, American shad, sturgeon, steelhead and a diverse food web is experiencing such low levels of productivity that an ecosystem crash may be imminent. Should this happen, many fisheries will not find the food necessary to sustain their survival. The prolonged decline of our fisheries now averaging between 80 and 95 percent would continue to the point of suffering what may be irreversible damage.

The estuary may be on the verge of an ecological disaster! The collapse of these natural resources would be tragic as hundreds of millions of dollars of public funding has been spent trying to restore the estuary and its fisheries. The economic consequences to the state's sport and commercial fishing industries and the state's tax base could run into many millions of dollars annually. These are industries that have already suffered dramatic losses due to prolonged declines of the Central Valley's once world class fisheries.

Scientists have long maintained that water export is one of the major impacts to the productivity of the of the Bay-Delta estuary. It has changed the natural flow regime and significantly decreased the amount of water that historically flowed through it into the ocean. Instead of the high spring runoff that flowed through the entire estuary, the water projects have reduced Delta outflow by at least 50%, on average, and dramatically changed the timing and the amount of water available to the estuary. These and other changes in the natural flow regime are currently under study by the IEP scientists. I believe they are at the very heart of the problem.

While agencies have reacted with an increased effort to further study the declining productivity, the Department of Water Resources continues to move forward with their "South Delta Improvement Project" (SDIP) that could increase water exports out of the Delta by up to 25%! A decision to move forward with the SDIP in the face of a collapsing ecosystem will further compound the estuary's problems and it could do irreparable harm to the estuary and its fisheries.

While I agree with agency scientists that there are other potential sources of impact, including toxic pesticides and herbicides from agricultural runoff and impacts from exotic species introduced from ballast water discharged by ships, I am strongly opposed to moving forward with the SDIP planning process or discussions on increasing flow rates. Many fishing groups support a moratorium on any additional export of Delta water until the problem with the Delta's food web is fixed and our anadromous fishery resources are maintained at sustainable population levels. These groups take this position after

more than twenty years of governmental promises that our Central Valley fisheries and the estuary they depend on would be restored.

Given the obvious concern for our state's natural resources, I am hopeful that you will support the position of stopping the SDIP from moving forward, especially since there is not an immediate need for the State Water Project to build additional export capability at this time.

One of the greatest estuaries in the world is in real danger. I urge you to help save it!

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