

I would like to take a moment to present to you some information about the California Bay-Delta watershed and it’s myriad of rivers and streams. This is actually the largest inland estuary in the western Americas, and all the major rivers from both the Sierra and the coastal mountains drain into it. The San Joaquin River watershed is 15,600 square miles in size, and the Sacramento River watershed is 26,500 square miles. If we were to include drainage from coastal mountains and streams, the total size is well above 55,000 square miles in total area. The entire state of California is 163,695 square miles. The Bay-Delta watershed makes up about 1/3 of our entire state. Approximately 30 million Californians receive water from this system. That is 3/4 of our total population!

To say this system is important is an understatement. In essence, it is the lifeblood of our state. The water from this system produces about 1/2 of all the fruits and vegetables for America, let alone exports to other nations. Historically, this watershed was the 2nd largest producer of salmon, behind only the Columbia River system. 10s of millions of salmon once returned annually to reproduce in this watershed’s rivers and streams. The bounty this watershed had to offer was a primary driver of why when people came here they never went back. It is one of Nature’s miracles and is available to all, as the state laws say.

However, it comes with a price, especially now when climate change and increased population and industry are calling for more water than it can provide, at least to keep everything alive. As we know, California is home to 1,000’s of fish, birds and other wildlife who also are in need of water. We have the 2nd largest number of endangered species in the U.S.

Over the past 20+ years more and more calls for water have been made. However, California only get so much rain and snow, and as a result, water has become a limited resource. There is a state agency responsible to manage and oversee how our water is used, and to ensure we protect the “Public Trust Resources” - those natural resources we all share as citizens of our state. This is the California State Water Resources Control Board. Here is its Mission:

***“To preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of California’s water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health, and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation and efficient use, for the benefit of present and future generations”.***

For years the central Bay-Delta region has been suffering reduced water quality, saltwater intrusion, and other harmful changes related to water quality. One of the jobs of the Water Board is to periodically re-evaluate watersheds for their health and quality. Under the federal Clean Water Act it must be done every 2 years. The last time the Bay-Delta water quality plan was updated was in 1995. We are seriously behind, and the Bay-Delta communities, like Stockton, know it. They suffer continually from water quality problems, as do other smaller communities in the region.

What is being done? In 2009 the State Water Board began work to update it’s plan for the Bay-Delta, and in December, 2018 the Water Board presented and approved phase 1 which deals with the San Joaquin system. The plan requires increased flows in tributaries to 40% of natural unimpeded flows. This was a significant change from normal, and brought immediate opposition from the state’s many regional water agencies. They made a request of Governor Brown to put this on hold and allow all stakeholders to work together to find a way to meet the new standard through what are now known as ***Voluntary Agreements.***

The Governor’s office agreed, and we’ve been on hold since. No change in the horrible conditions in the Bay-Delta watershed, and for the cities and towns suffering from terrible water conditions. Many hours have been spent in negotiations and meetings, millions of dollars spent, and thousands of hours of time and effort have gone into the process. To date - **31/2 years later** - no agreed to outcome has been reached. In late 2021 we in the fishing community made calls & sent letters to the Governor and state agencies asking to simply implement the already approved Water Board phase 1 up-date of the Bay-Delta water plan for

the San Joaquin River.  **We’ve gotten no where,** though late last year it looked like the Water Board would be allowed the implementation of phase 1. No such luck!

***Where are We Now?***

**Phase 1 has not been implemented**! The Governor and his administration as doubled down on the Voluntary Agreement process and they are only meeting with limited stakeholders - water agencies and NGOs who lean in their direction.

It appears now that the Governor’s administration is ready to propose a deal. The deal would lock in high water diversions at great cost to many in California, including those of us who care about fisheries. This “agreement” does not have a single signature from a Bay-Delta water agency, environmental group, fishing or environmental justice NGO, Delta community city or Tribe. Even the groups in discussions agree many water agencies and other stakeholders don’t support it. The ‘deal’ is designed by a group of powerful interests to continue the status quo of excessive diversions, and will not protect the natural resources of our environment or its fisheries.

**Here are a couple of Resources you may need to see or use:**

**California Planning & Conservation League:** **Bay-Delta Water Plan, Where is it now?**  <https://mavensnotebook.com/2021/02/03/planning-conservation-league-the-bay-delta-water-quality-control-plan-where-is-it-at/>

**Fishing Group Letter** **- VA Funding:** <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YqBH3bbWz6wY3d5p1XIOb9GLZAP_p8Bh/view?usp=sharing>

**Environmental Advocates Letter - VA Funding:**  <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Qrqk8F7Ev4TdzJO9r-Jy1O6eu1xVv5eG/view?usp=sharing>

***What can You Do? - Send emails & phone to the below:***

**Toni Atkins**, President pro Tempore California State Senate, 916-651-4039, https://sd39.senate.ca.gov/contact

**Anthony Rendon**, Speaker California State Assembly, 916-319-2063, https://speaker.asmdc.org/contact-anthony

**Nancy Skinner,** Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Comm, 916-651-4009, https://sd09.senate.ca.gov/email-senator

**Phil Ting,** Chair Committee on Budget, 916-319-2019, https://a19.asmdc.org/contact