



This letter is from the Executive Committee of the Yokuts, group of the Sierra Club. We represent 850 members in Stanislaus County and are part of the Motherlode Chapter of the Sierra Club, based in Sacramento. Our group supports at least a 40% freshwater flow from the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Merced, and San Joaquin Rivers making it to the Bay-Delta.

The Bay-Delta provides habitat for more than 500 species of wildlife and serves as a migration pathway for salmon, steelhead, and sturgeon traveling to and from their home streams to the Pacific Ocean. Reduced freshwater flow has enabled cyanobacteria to thrive in the Delta. These algae produce toxins that can make people sick and kill plankton and wildlife. Historically, spawning salmon may have exceeded 400,000 in the San Joaquin River Basin, but in recent years that number has plummeted to a few thousand. Salmon are considered a keystone species, as they provide food for other animals and transport nutrients from the ocean to upland habitats. As more than 100 species depend on salmon, this issue is not just about salmon, it's about restoring our salmon-based ecosystem.

A lack of planning and vision for the future has led us on a path that is simply unsustainable for our water supplies. There are just too many demands on our rivers, too many diversions, too many almond trees...

Our committee does sympathize with farmers who are legitimately scared when facing a reduced amount of water. We also appreciate several of the speakers from the agricultural community who acknowledge that care for the environment is part of their responsibility.

We are also concerned about the threats of a few that with higher freshwater flows in our local rivers, an increase in groundwater pumping is inevitable. This is not the answer. Not only does this pit neighbor versus neighbor, the earth is telling us Stop!, in the form of subsidence. Many farmers know that requiring more water to remain in rivers recharges our aquifers and helps make farming more sustainable. More research into the interplay between surface water and groundwater supplies is needed.

We are living beyond the limits set by nature. Everyone who uses the San Joaquin and its tributaries must play a part in restoring our local rivers so that they can continue to sustain us.

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