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From: **Barbara Balen**
Date: Sun, Sep 14, 2008 at 11:10 PM
Subject: water conservation 20X2020 comments
To: 2020comments@ccp.csus.edu

Dear 20X2020 Agency Team,

Attached please find my comments regarding the water conservation proposal.

Thank you,

Barbara Balen

September 14, 2008

Re: Governor's Statewide Water Conservation
Statewide Implementation Plan

Dear 20X2020 Agency Team;

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Water Conservation 20X2020 Agency Team's developing a statewide implementation plan for urban water conservation.

My perspective herein is undoubtedly influenced by 30 years as a Forest Service resource manager (Stanislaus National Forest) and 5 years as a board member on the Tuolumne Utilities District Board of Directors. I am writing this letter as a private citizen with the urging to consider the following fundamental questions: *What is the purpose and need for water conservation and what does it (water conservation) look like throughout California?*

A question of stewardship: In the USDA federal government the "purpose and need" question of any project is what drives the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. What is the purpose and need for water conservation? Is it for the benefit of the environment? Future growth? Homeland security? Water reliability? All of the above? How should it be accomplished? If it is a stewardship question, shouldn't the *human carrying capacity* of the land be part of the equation? Should the conservation of soil be part of the equation? And ultimately, should the conservation of Sierran watersheds as insurance against the disruption and impairment of water reliability due to catastrophic fire be part of the water conservation equation?

I believe water conservation is about stewardship. As a public land manager, my decisions must protect non-renewable and renewable resources now and for future generations. No matter what the public's perception is of their "right" to use resources in one generation, my client is the resource base. Land and water are finite. True sustainability means that human impacts do not outpace the land's ability to renew itself. Within the larger context of California, what is this push for

conservation intended to achieve? Can the definition of conservation include stewardship practices like circulating and recycling "source water" higher up in the watersheds? To my way of thinking it is impossible to separate the two.

Multiple benefits: I live and work in the watersheds of the Mokelumne, Stanislaus and Tuolumne Rivers in Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties. These counties have historic water conveyance systems (ditches, canals and flumes) that are literally knitted into the environment and built over a century ago by gold miners. These naturalized waterways provide beneficial uses as water flows throughout the county. They provide irrigation water for outdoor needs, replenish ground water, lower atmospheric temperatures, reduce the risk of fire and, importantly, provide wetlands and connectivity for migrating species that disperse east into the Sierra Nevada Mountains from the Delta and the Pacific flyway. These gravity fed water systems have replaced the role of degraded or dried up creeks as migratory pathways through rural communities and into our national forest and parks. If the goal for water conservation is for putting water back into the environment, than I respectfully implore the team to look at these existing historic systems as already achieving water conservation's desired future condition.

Recycling and re-using waste water as a form of conservation is also evident in the Mountain Counties. For example, Tuolumne Utilities District recycles close to 100% of its treated waste water. This water is treated to a secondary level and gravity fed to ranches where it is used for irrigating pasture lands. This arrangement benefits TUD and it benefits the ranching community. It keeps the water in circulation, maintains open space, fire protection, lengthens the grazing season, reduces cattle impacts on high elevation meadows and fuel costs in trucking them there, and allows for the pasture land to provide ecological services (water absorption, filtration, release) for downstream benefit. When coupled with the ecological services the ditch system provides throughout the County, it is clear that Tuolumne County exemplifies conservation via stewardship of its water resources in a very practical way.

Like the Perrier Water Company in France who pays upstream dairy farmers for good stewardship practices because of the benefits from keeping the water clean and reliable for Perrier, California water conservation policy needs to recognize stewardship practices upstream of urban environments. Perrier did not pipe the water around the dairies or otherwise take water away, rather they were asked to change to stewardship practices that then benefited their livelihood, Perrier and the environment. Closer to home, the stewardship of "source water" makes more sense than a % water reduction. A 20% reduction may have environmental consequences that would need to be determined in accordance with CEQA/NEPA.

In sum, the larger question about water conservation includes stewardship, and I am asking the Water Conservation 20X2020 Agency Team to recognize that:

- Mountain Counties of the Sierra recycle and circulate water resources for multiple benefits including human, environmental and downstream beneficiaries.

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- These stewardship practices of source water already achieve the desired outcome of conserving water and;
- A 20% reduction may adversely affect the environment .

Again, that you for the opportunity to comment on this effort.

Sincerely,

Barbara Balen