Public Hearing (3/20/13)
Bay-Delta Plan SED
Deadline: 3/29/13 by 12 noon

To:
Jeanine Townsend
Clerk of the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95814-0100

From:
Mark C. Takaro
3026 Stanton St.
Berkeley, CA 94702

I would like to comment on the Bay Delta Plan and suggest that alternatives to the construction of diversion tunnels have not been thoroughly explored. I think that there may be less costly and more environmentally justifiable alternatives to the apparently "preferred" alternative of the diversion tunnels and urge you to more fully develop those other alternatives. As you are doubtless aware,

- At least half of the San Joaquin River's natural flow should reach the Delta during the first six months of each year. Flows in the summer and fall should be sufficient to maintain fish and wildlife, water quality and recreational opportunities.

- Low river flows impede fish passage, concentrate pollutants, raise water temperatures, decrease dissolved oxygen, and eliminate migratory clues.

- Historically, populations of spawning salmon may have exceeded 400,000 fish in the San Joaquin River Basin, but in many recent years that figure has plummeted to just a few thousand fish.

- Salmon are a keystone species, providing food for other animals and transporting nutrients from the ocean to upland habitats. More than 100 species depend on salmon.

- The commercial salmon fishery in California is on the brink. The salmon population was so low in 2008 and 2009 that the commercial fishing season had to be cancelled.

- The Bay-Delta forms the West Coast's largest estuary, providing habitat for more than 500 species of wildlife. It serves as a major stopover for the Pacific Flyway and as a migration path for salmon, steelhead and sturgeon traveling to and from their home streams to the Pacific Ocean.

- Up to 6.8 million acre-feet (2.2 trillion gallons) of water per year are pumped from the southern Delta for agriculture and urban uses.

- Through better management of snowmelt, water efficient irrigation practices, and replacing lower-value, water-intensive crops with higher-value, water-efficient crops, we could grow more food with less water.

I believe that the possibility suggested by Dr. Robert Pike to draw diversions from much farther downstream, near Sherman Island might be a better alternative than the proposed tunnels. Other elements may also improve the conditions for fish and wildlife that rely on the Delta while allowing some diversions/

I hope you will seriously consider the alternatives to the costly and environmentally degrading diversion tunnels.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Mark Takaro