



San Joaquin Tributaries Authority

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State Water Resources Control Board Proposal Could Devastate Valley Economy

San Joaquin Tributaries Authority Urges Caution, Use of Science in Establishment of New Standards for River Flows

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SACRAMENTO – Dealing another blow to the Central Valley’s fragile economy, state water regulators today proposed increasing flows in the San Joaquin River by **30** percent beginning **next year**, a move that could kill **thousands** of agricultural jobs and cause millions in losses in the distressed region.

The recommendation by the State Water Resources Control Board would require valley water agencies to reduce water deliveries to farms and industries at a time when unemployment is near record highs and businesses are struggling.

In Stanislaus County, for example, the jobless rate doubled to 18 percent between 2007 and 2010 and total countywide income plunged by a staggering \$1 billion.

“Today’s proposal is the wrong idea at the wrong time,” said Allen Short, member of the San Joaquin Tributaries Authority. “If approved, it would place enormous pressure on a region that is already severely economically distressed.”

Short added that the recommendation is particularly troubling because the state board has failed to establish a scientifically proven link between increased flows in the San Joaquin River and benefits for salmon and steelhead populations.

Instead, its proposals have relied on general studies and an assumption that higher flows invariably lead to better “conditions” for the fish, without providing data to substantiate that position.

“They say these increased flows will help the salmon population, but they’re just picking arbitrary numbers without providing any supporting science,” Short said. “If you’re going to ask people to make this sort of serious sacrifice, you’d better be darn sure you know what the benefits are, and the fact is, they don’t.”

The State Water Resources Control Board is reviewing flow standards, salinity and other factors on the San Joaquin River as part of an overall review of water quality in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. A decision by the board on whether to adjust flow standards, and by how much, is scheduled for October.

Under the California Water Code, the state board is required to consider a multitude of potential impacts in setting river flow standards, including sociologic and economic consequences. Farming has been one of few bright spots in the valley during the lingering recession, so an increase in flows – resulting in a decrease in water available to agriculture and other users -- could not come at a worse time.

“Our region has been struggling with double digit unemployment, but the farming community has been the one sector holding its own,” said XX. “If this decision goes through and we take a hit in agriculture and lose still more jobs, it’s hard to imagine how bad things will get.”

The San Joaquin Tributaries Authority is urging the board to conduct rigorous studies to establish flow levels that safely balance the needs of all delta users. Lasting solutions for the Delta ecosystem and California water and power users require a multi-dimensional approach to the problem that is rooted in real data.

The State Water Resources Control Board will release its final draft environmental document in August.

The San Joaquin Tributaries Authority is a coalition of water agencies whose members include the Modesto Irrigation District, Turlock Irrigation District, Oakdale Irrigation District, Merced Irrigation District, and the South San Joaquin Irrigation District. The members provide water service along the San Joaquin River and advocate for the fair and balanced use of its resources.