



San Joaquin Tributary Association

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STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD STUDY ON HYDROELECTRIC POWER ALONG KEY DELTA TRIBUTARIES IGNORES KEY INFORMATION

POWER FACILITY OPERATORS AND OWNERS ALONG DELTA TRIBUTARIES NOT CONSULTED FOR VITAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

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SACRAMENTO – A report due out tomorrow assessing the impact of proposed water management changes on hydroelectric power production in Northern California is stirring controversy because its authors failed to consult with owners and operators of key hydrogeneration facilities.

The report, prepared by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), is one of several upcoming studies designed to help regulators predict the myriad environmental impacts of their plan to adopt new flow standards on the Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Merced rivers.

But participants in the process say the SWRCB hydroelectric report cannot be trusted because board staff did not bother to call those who run the plants and best understand the dynamics of hydrogeneration in the region. That failure raises serious doubts about the thoroughness and overall quality of the report and its conclusions.

“You cannot conduct a vital analysis like this without gathering accurate information from the sources on the front lines,” said Allen Short, a member of the San Joaquin Tributaries Assn. “Decisions with implications of this magnitude need to be made with all of the information on the table. This process demands real science, not abstract predictions, because in the end, it will be California ratepayers who suffer the consequences.”

In addition to failing to solicit input from the owners and operators of affected hydroelectric facilities, SWCRB staff members responsible for drafting the report acknowledged at the board’s Feb. 21 meeting that they had not talked to California ISO, manager of the state’s power grid.

The hydrogeneration study is part of mandatory proceedings leading up to the state board's adoption of new flow standards on the Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Merced rivers, which feed the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The staff proposal calls for releasing between 20 percent, 40 percent or 60 percent of the unimpaired flows on the rivers Feb. 1 through June 30 of every year.

Recently, the San Joaquin Tributaries Assn. sent the SWRCB a technical report detailing the significant expected impacts to generation at three hydroelectric facilities. But, disappointingly, there are no indications this report has been considered by board staff.

Hydrogeneration is an important component of California's energy production, accounting for about 14.5 percent of the state's total. A drop in the production of hydroelectric power is likely to cause consumer rate increases as utilities are required to compensate with other, more expensive sources.

The San Joaquin River Tributaries Association 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.