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Opinion

VIEWPOINTS

To help the Delta, we need to fix the Sierra

California is hell-bent on draining the Sierra by taking water from one region to meet the environmental needs of another.

Though essential to the survival of the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta, the Sierra Nevada watershed is rarely recognized for its natural resources and significance.

Environmental groups want more water for fish in the Delta and are willing to sacrifice the quality of life of Sierra communities with permanent and forced water rationing. It is about extracting resources from the Sierra to satisfy downstream interests – first gold, then timber and now water.

Independent Delta science reports are ignored. To have a robust fishery, there needs to be ample food, habitat and cold water at the right time. Catastrophic wildfires in the Sierra, fueled by an unprecedented number of dead and dying trees, threaten water supplies and downstream water quality.

If the Delta is to survive and thrive, we need to fix the Sierra. It is critical that the state save water for later use and prevent fires that harm the environment and reduce natural water storage.

Some who call for more surface water storage want to drain the Sierra by



BY JOHN KINGSBURY
Special to The Bee

removing dams and the stored water. This is hypocritical. Many who oppose dams also fish and raft in our world-renowned whitewater rivers. Removing dams would dry up much of our river system during the summer. It is essential that cold, fresh water is stored in Sierra reservoirs for multiple beneficial uses later, including rafting and fishing.

There needs to be a fundamental change in the way water is managed in the Delta, its watershed and all of California. The difficult challenge is to wade through flawed regulatory policies and special interests to shepherd bold changes in a complex water system. Only then will we be able to achieve a healthy Delta and a reliable water supply for California.

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