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November 13, 2018

California Department of Water Resources
Karla Nemeth, Director

California Department of Fish & Wildlife
Chuck Bonham, Director

Regarding: November 7, 2018 SWRCB Public Hearing

Dear Director Nemeth and Director Bonham:

Thank you for attending the State Water Resources Control Board hearing on November 7, 2018. I was very pleased to hear both of you talk about the tributaries to the Delta, but more specifically the need for inclusion and restoration in the mountain counties region as part of your comprehensive approach that will hopefully find its way into the voluntary settlement agreements. I applaud your efforts, along with Governor Brown, Governor elect Newsom, and the appeal from those working on settlement agreements to persuade the Water Board to postpone acting on a misguided staff proposal. I strongly support Water Board Member Dee Dee D’Adamo’s call for “balancing the needs of fish with the needs of cities and the people who live in them – people whose lives and jobs are dependent on that water. We must also consider the needs of agriculture, and the beneficial use of water to grow crops.” This too should apply to the mountain counties area.

There has been a disconnect between the wildland-urban interface (WUI) and the Delta. Not to recognize the value of rural water use in the WUI, which is inextricably integrated within the natural environment, is a failure to understand the significance of this water being kept in circulation. The important role of rural water use in the ecosystem cannot be overstated.

Increased flows as proposed, as a principal means of implementation in the name of protecting fish, should not be a trade off at the expense of a reliable water supply for the people, agriculture, and the environment in the Mountain Counties.

Most of the infrastructure, management, and investment in the mountain counties, resides at the local level. Ensuring water security for communities also includes the stewardship of natural resources to protect or create habitat for local species. How can you be good stewards of the land, but not have the resources to do it? You can't just take more water from the reservoirs, move it out through the system without causing harm to people, agriculture, and environment in this region.

There is a heightened awareness to improve watershed health now because of catastrophic fire and recurring droughts. Coupled with lack of water storage, degraded water quality in the Delta, and increased demand on the tributaries to the Delta, it is essential that the settlement agreements consider the impacts and unintended consequences to the endangered aquatic plant and animal species, including endemic and migrating species that are already stressed by forest fires and drought above the rim dams. It is important to consider a comprehensive list of restoration projects, both flow and non-flow measures, imbedded in the settlement agreements to address these concerns for the survival of the mountain counties and the Delta.

Your leadership is very much appreciated, and we look forward to providing any assistance to help find balanced solutions for all of Californians.

Sincerely,



John Kingsbury, Executive Director
Mountain Counties Water Resources Association

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