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Media Contacts

For Stanislaus County: David Jones | David.Jones@stancounty.com | 209.652.1177
For Merced County: Mike North | MNorth@co.merced.ca.us | 209.726.2744

Broad coalition stands together against state water grab

Multi-county region calls for better analyses, improved process and mitigation of impacts

Today, after much delay and with nominal input from or response to our communities, the State Water Resources Control Board released its revised Draft Substitute Environmental Document (SED) in support of Phase 1 of its Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan.

The broad coalition of local governments and organizations listed above is greatly disappointed that the State Water Board and its consultants have rejected numerous requests from our region to discuss the

assumptions and data underlying the SED's analyses and recommendations. No other agency would be permitted to conduct a multi-year study, at the cost of tens of millions of taxpayer dollars, and fail to even discuss its assumptions with those who stand to be impacted by its recommendations. The release of this new environmental document marks a failure to engage in serious technical analyses of environmental, social, economic, educational and cultural impacts with those to be affected in this region.

Our region has never been more united on this issue, and these coalition members stand together in opposition of the SED as currently drafted. We will continue to analyze the voluminous updated SED carefully in order to fully understand the depths that the State Water Board will go to harm our region on the whim of possibly benefitting the Delta and salmon.

Groundwater and Drinking Water

Despite a groundwater crisis that resulted in the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act in 2014, as well as continued drought impacts, the State Water Board desires even more water from one of California's most challenged regions. Groundwater is the drinking water source for most of the 800,000 residents of this multi-county region. The 2012 SED ignored the well-documented recharge value of irrigation water, and was unable to account for the state's new groundwater laws and groundwater pumping increases resulting from the drought. If this proposal is implemented, this region will be severely vulnerable in the effort to achieve state-mandated groundwater sustainability.

Many of our communities already face significant drinking water quality and quantity issues. These were ignored in the 2012 SED. The regulatory taking that's recommended in the SED will threaten the ability to provide surface water for drinking to the cities of Turlock, Ceres and other communities. It also directly undermines efforts to maintain groundwater quality in disadvantaged communities that don't have surface water.

Economics

If implemented, the proposal shuts down any hope of economic growth in this multi-county region, eliminates swaths of agricultural employment, thwarts job creation and creates enormous funding challenges for schools, cities, public health, law enforcement and other essential public services.

Our region is among the most economically challenged in the entire state. We have some of the highest unemployment rates, a multitude of health challenges, and the lowest educational achievement rates in all of California.

This water grab by the state of California, without mitigation or due analysis of impacts, will be vigorously opposed by this coalition. Our organizations will continue to review the updated SED carefully. We resolve to strongly oppose the SED in every possible venue unless its impacts are fully mitigated.

Coalition List

In Stanislaus County:

City of Ceres
City of Hughson
City of Modesto
City of Newman
City of Oakdale
City of Patterson
City of Riverbank
City of Turlock
City of Waterford
County of Stanislaus
El Concilio
Modesto Chamber of Commerce
Modesto Irrigation District
Oakdale Irrigation District
Turlock Irrigation District
Stanislaus County Farm Bureau
Stanislaus County Office of Education

In Merced County:

City of Atwater
City of Gustine
City of Livingston
City of Los Banos
City of Merced
County of Merced
Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce
Merced County Farm Bureau
Merced County Office of Education
Merced Irrigation District

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