



Statement from Nicole Sandkulla, Chief Executive Officer, about the Need for State Analysis of a Tuolumne River Voluntary Agreement (TRVA) as an Alternative to the Bay-Delta Plan to Protect the Water Needs of 1.8 Million Residents, 40,000 Businesses, and Hundreds of Communities in Alameda, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties and for the Fish, Which also Depend on the River

March 9, 2021

In December 2018, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) adopted the Bay-Delta Plan (Plan) that includes more water to be retained in the Tuolumne River to protect fish and the environment.

The current Plan, however, would result in a very serious loss of up to 90 million gallons of water every day from the San Francisco Regional (Hetch Hetchy) Water System (System) that the water users BAWSCA represents under California law (AB 2058) rely on. They will suffer water reductions up to 50% during a drought like the recent 2014-2017 drought. Such water losses would result in unacceptable impacts on job growth, a slowdown in the economy, and health, safety and economic risks for people, businesses and our communities.

BAWSCA agrees that this problem must be addressed, but the present Plan seriously threatens the traditional water supply from the Tuolumne River for people, businesses and cities in the three counties, and they must be protected as well. That is why the Plan is unacceptable and requires a realistic alternative.

Fortunately, there is one--a thoughtful, science-based alternative--the Tuolumne River Voluntary Agreement (TRVA), developed by the Modesto and Turlock Irrigation Districts and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (the Agencies) that will avoid such a catastrophe.

The State Board has encouraged all parties, including the Agencies and other water providers, to work with the water-related California governmental departments to do necessary design and planning and introduce this reasonable alternative as part of a Bay-Delta watershed-wide, so-called "global voluntary-agreement package" for approval and implementation.

Recognizing that independent, voluntary-agreement discussions were happening, the State Board directed its staff to work with the involved entities to bring a voluntary agreement to the State Board for analysis and consideration.

This also is the time for the parties who depend on the Tuolumne River to support the Governor's voluntary-agreement alternative, as BAWSCA and many other parties do. Settlement discussions for the issues related to the Plan have continued since 2018. Costly and contentious lawsuits have been filed to reverse the State Board's order adopting the Plan. And the SFPUC has been discussing solutions with various interested parties for about a year and half but without any meaningful progress.

Taxpayer money is not required to finance the alternative. Water users will pay the costs in their water bills.

BAWSCA is increasing its efforts to protect the water users it represents in line with its legislative mandate.

Therefore, we ask the Governor to extend his leadership now to support a technical and environmental evaluation of the TRVA by the State Board as a desirable alternative to the adopted Bay Delta Plan. If improvements to the TRVA are needed, they should be proposed and analyzed by the State Board. It is a sensible way forward for fish, people and the California economy.

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