



Statement from Nicole Sandkulla, Chief Executive Officer, about the Need for State Analysis of the 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 All Depend on the River

April 19, 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 during times of drought from the San Francisco Regional (Hetch Hetchy) Water System (System) that the water users BAWSCA represents rely on under California law (AB 2058).

As water suppliers, our member agencies must adopt state-required water management plans soon and identify the fact that they will suffer up to 50 percent water losses during a drought like the recent 2014-2017 drought. They must also adopt a drought-contingency plan to allocate the available water supply, which will result in unacceptable impacts on job growth, a slowdown in the economy, and health, safety and economic penalties for our people, businesses and communities.

BAWSCA agrees that the fish problem must be addressed, but the 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. These impacts are unacceptable and require a realistic alternative to the Plan.

Fortunately, there is one, the thoughtful, science-based TRVA, developed by the Modesto and Turlock Irrigation Districts and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (the Agencies). The TRVA can avoid such a catastrophe for the water users that rely on the System. If improvements to the TRVA are needed, they should be proposed and analyzed by the State Board.

The State Board has encouraged all parties, including the Agencies and other water providers, to work with the water-related California governmental departments to complete the required design and planning and bring a voluntary agreement to the State Board, as the Board suggested, for its analysis, potential approval and implementation.

This also is the time for the parties, who depend on the Tuolumne River water, to support the Governor's voluntary-agreement strategy, as BAWSCA and many other parties will do.

Settlement discussions for the issues related to the Plan have continued since 2018 without agreement. 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 parties for about a year and half without any significant progress.

Taxpayer money is not required to finance the TRVA. 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.

This is a sensible way forward for fish, people and the California economy.

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