

*Friends of the River
Natural Resources Defense Council
Alliance for Democracy
Adventure Connection, Inc.
Alameda Creek Alliance
All-Outdoors
American Canoe Association
American Rivers
American Whitewater
As You Sow
Baykeeper
Butte Environmental Council
California Hydropower Reform Coalition
California Indian Basketweavers Association
California Indian Environmental Alliance
California Native Plant Society
California Outdoors
California Save Our Streams Council
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance
California Trout, Inc
California Water Impact Network
California Wilderness Coalition
Californians for Western Wilderness
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation
Central California Canoe Club
Coalition for Clean Air
Community Clean Water Institute
Defenders of Wildlife
Endangered Habitats League
Environment Now
Environmental Action Committee of West Marin
Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo
Environmental Defense Center
Environmental Working Group & EWG Action Fund
Foothill Conservancy
Forest Guardians
Friends of the Eel River
Friends of the Santa Clara River
Friends of Trinity River
Granite Bay Flycasters
International Rivers Network
Inter-tribal Council of California, Inc.
Klamath Forest Alliance
Livermore American Indian Center
Mission Peak Fly Anglers
Mono Lake Committee
Northcoast Environmental Center
Northern California Council Federation of Fly Fishers
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
Planning and Conservation League
Protect American River Canyons
Public Trust Alliance
Revive the San Joaquin
Rural Quality Coalition of Nevada County
Sacramento River Preservation Trust
San Joaquin Paddlers
Sierra Club California
Sierra College ECOS
Sierra Nevada Alliance
Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign
Snowlands Network
Southern California Watershed Alliance
Sugar Pine Foundation
South Yuba River Citizens League
Ted Fay Fly Shop
The Bay Institute
The River Project
Trout Unlimited
W.E.T. River Trips
WiLDCOAST/COSTASALVAjE
WildPlaces
Winnemem Wintu Tribe
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation*

March 15, 2007

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

We appreciate your leadership in the fight against global warming and your willingness to take new approaches to many of California's environmental challenges. We write today to express our interest in working with you to constructively and cooperatively address California's growing water needs in this time of global warming.

However, the undersigned organizations strongly oppose the proposal in your 2007 California Strategic Growth Plan to provide four billion dollars in general obligation and revenue bonds to build the Sites Offstream Storage Reservoir and the Temperance Flat Dam in California. In our collective judgment, these projects are not effective solutions to global warming and they are definitely the wrong investments for California. Below, we outline our objections to these proposals and offer alternative recommendations, which we feel would provide economic and environmental benefits and bring fresh thinking to California water management.

As a practical matter, environmental and engineering studies for these projects have not been completed. The environmental impacts of these projects are as yet undetermined. We do not know how much water they will produce under plausible global warming scenarios and at what cost. It is unclear who will pay for the dams, and who will actually benefit from the water. Waiting for these studies to conclude before we make decisions that will cost billions of dollars is both practical and fiscally prudent.

We also disagree with the assumption in the Strategic Growth Plan that new dams and surface storage reservoirs are needed. The 2005 California Water Plan posed three scenarios for water use in our state. Two of the three scenarios estimate that water demand in the state

will decline by 2030, even with anticipated population and economic growth. The Water Plan indicates that we can generate more than four million acre feet of water per year through urban water use efficiency and recycling alone. In fact, every dollar invested in urban water use efficiency generally provides four times the amount of water produced by twelve dollars invested in costly and destructive dams. Clearly, if we can reduce our demand for water at a fraction of the cost of new expensive dams, then the former course of action is more practical and economical.

The Strategic Growth Plan also suggests that new dams are needed to mitigate the loss of snow pack predicted due to global warming. Most scientists agree that there is no proof that the new dams proposed in your plan are needed in response to global warming. With sensible management, the state's existing robust dam system, coupled with additional investments in water use efficiency and recycling, will help ensure a reliable water supply even with potential snow pack losses due to global warming.

Regardless of the scenario considered, the California Water Plan indicates that new dams and reservoirs would produce less reliable water at greater cost than virtually any other water management option, including conservation, reclamation, ground water banking, and even cloud seeding. In but one example, the approximate amount of water reliably produced by Sites and Temperance Flat – 500,000 acre feet – is virtually identical to the amount of water lost in a year due to evaporation from California's existing major reservoirs. Construction of these new surface reservoirs will simply increase evaporative loss.

California already has more than 1,200 dams on its rivers. The most effective and economic dam sites in the state have already been developed. The exorbitant cost of new dams unfairly competes for limited state funds for other more legitimate state needs, and reduces funding available for more cost effective and environmentally beneficial alternatives. In addition to these larger policy issues, there are specific problems with the proposed Temperance Flat Dam, Sites Offstream Storage Reservoir, and other projects currently under study.

The Temperance Flat Dam would drown up to 7,000 acres of public land in the San Joaquin River Gorge managed for outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat, public education, and traditional Native American cultural uses. The dam would produce less hydroelectricity than it would destroy by drowning at least two existing hydroelectric power plants. Its reservoir will seldom fill, because most of the San Joaquin River's water is already captured behind existing dams. We have so thoroughly dammed and diverted the San Joaquin, that it runs dry downstream of Fresno in most years. Temperance Flat will in no way contribute to the court-ordered restoration of San Joaquin and is likely to continue the long history of the river's degradation.

The Sites Offstream Storage Reservoir is not nearly as environmentally benign as proponents may claim. Sites would be filled by water diverted from the Sacramento River. It would use at least one existing diversion dam that currently impedes the migration of 70% of the threatened spring run Chinook salmon that spawn upstream of Red Bluff. So much water could be taken from the Sacramento River to fill Sites that the river's meander-based riparian ecosystem would be degraded and critical habitat for dozens of threatened and endangered

species lost. The reservoir itself would drown 14,000 acres of grassland, oak woodland, and vernal pool habitat, and possibly hundreds of Native American and historical sites. Electricity needed to pump water into the reservoir would likely result in increased greenhouse gas emissions that add to the global warming threat. Sites water will be exported south of the Delta, adding to the further decline of the Delta ecosystem and native fish species.

Legislation introduced to implement the Strategic Growth Plan allows the diversion of billions of dollars to other surface storage projects if Sites and Temperance Flat are infeasible. This could provide state funding for a proposed raise of Shasta Dam and expansion of its reservoir. This project violates state law protecting the free flowing McCloud River and its extraordinary wild trout fishery and other values. Reservoir expansion would also drown the homeland of the Winnemem Wintu Tribe, including cultural sites in use today. The expanded reservoir would also require the removal or relocation of up to 600 homes, businesses, roads, and other structures. We believe that this threat is quite real, particularly since the Westlands Water District in the San Joaquin Valley has recently purchased a private fishing club on the McCloud River specifically to remove at least one impediment to the dam raise.

It's a simple matter of choice. We can choose to wisely invest millions in efficient water use technologies and programs that we know will reduce demand or we can choose to invest billions in costly and environmentally destructive dams. The first choice produces more water at less cost and with fewer impacts to the environment than building new dams. Reasonable urban water efficiency and recycling investments would reliably produce three to four times the approximate firm yield from Sites and Temperance Flat at a fraction of the cost. California has the opportunity to lead the western states in investments in modern water conservation technologies – an approach that protects our environment, costs less money and offers opportunities for new business development.

Unfortunately, California's urban and agricultural water use efficiency programs are grossly under-funded. Current grant funding for these programs is 80% lower than projected in the CALFED Record of Decision, and as a result, the state is achieving only about 20% of its reasonable water savings target. The solution is clear: your Strategic Growth Plan would be more successful in advancing water supply reliability if funding now proposed for building new dams were allocated to water use efficiency and recycling programs.

For all these reasons, we urge you to eliminate funding for new dam construction in your Strategic Growth Plan. You have demonstrated critical leadership on controversial issues as well as a commitment to protecting the environment. You can do both and meet our state's water needs by investing in sound water use efficiency and recycling programs, instead of directing billions of dollars to building unstudied, costly, and destructive new dams. You would have our full support with such a proposal.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss this issue further. Please ask your staff to contact Peter Ferenbach at Friends of the River, 915 20th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, Phone: (916) 442-3155 Ext. 221 to schedule a possible meeting.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Peter Ferenbach
Executive Director
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