

Submitted via electronic mail to SacDeltaComments@waterboards.ca.gov

January 30, 2025

Mr. Erik Ekdahl, Deputy Director
Division of Water Rights
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Comment Letter – Draft Sacramento/Delta Bay-Delta Plan Updates

Dear Mr. Ekdahl:

The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) appreciates the opportunity to provide public comments to the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) on the draft Sacramento/Delta updates to the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Watershed (Bay-Delta Plan). ACWA represents approximately 470 public water agencies that collectively deliver approximately 90% of the water in California for domestic, agricultural, and industrial uses.

ACWA submitted written comments to the State Water Board on January 10 expressing strong support for the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (HRL) Program as the preferred pathway for updating the Sacramento/Delta portions of the Bay-Delta Plan. Specific to Alternative 5a and Alternative 6a, ACWA offers the following input to the State Water Board.

1. Remove Alternative 5a from consideration.

Alternative 5a is not adequately described or analyzed in the State Water Board's draft Staff Report/Substitute Environmental Document in Support of Potential Updates to the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary for the Sacramento River and its Tributaries, Delta Eastside Tributaries, and Delta. Consequently, water suppliers and other interested parties are uncertain how it would be implemented and unable to assess its impacts to provide meaningful input. Without a clear understanding of what is being proposed, the inclusion of Alternative 5a introduces unnecessary ambiguity and ACWA recommends that it be removed from the final draft Sacramento/Delta updates.

ACWA does not believe that Alternative 5a should be included in the final draft Sacramento/Delta updates; however, ACWA recommends that the State Water Board collaborate with water system operators, who are committed to engaging in a process to identify improved drought management strategies for the future. To ensure a comprehensive approach, this drought management framework should include in-Delta water users and take into account the Drought Protection Program agreed upon by the Sacramento River Settlement Contractors and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

2. Incorporate the California Department of Water Resources and California Department of Fish and Wildlife's proposal for Alternative 6a.

The State Water Board's proposal for Alternative 6a is a preliminary concept that has not been extensively analyzed. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) proposal for Alternative 6a leverages the HRL Program, builds on adaptive management principles, and ensures decisions are informed by sound science. This approach offers a more balanced path forward, avoiding premature flow-specific thresholds while allowing time to identify solutions that better protect native fish species and align with the HRL Program's goals. ACWA recommends that the State Water Board incorporate DWR and CDFW's proposal for Alternative 6a in the final draft Sacramento/Delta updates, rather than the State Water Board's proposal.

Conclusion

ACWA appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the draft Sacramento/Delta updates. Please do not hesitate to contact Stephen Pang at StephenP@acwa.com or (916) 669-2369 if you have any questions or would like to discuss these comments further.

Sincerely,



Stephen Pang
State Relations Advocate
Association of California Water Agencies

cc: The Honorable Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural Resources, California
Natural Resources Agency
The Honorable Yana Garcia, Secretary for Environmental Protection, California
Environmental Protection Agency
The Honorable E. Joaquin Esquivel, Chair, State Water Resources Control Board



The Honorable Dorene D'Adamo, Vice Chair, State Water Resources Control Board

The Honorable Laurel Firestone, Member, State Water Resources Control Board

The Honorable Sean Maguire, Member, State Water Resources Control Board

The Honorable Nichole Morgan, Member, State Water Resources Control Board

The Honorable Charlton Bonham, Director, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

The Honorable Karla Nemeth, Director, California Department of Water Resources

Mr. Eric Oppenheimer, Executive Director, State Water Resources Control Board

Mr. Dave Eggerton, Executive Director, Association of California Water Agencies

Ms. Cindy Tuck, Deputy Executive Director, Association of California Water Agencies