

California State Water Resources Board Votes to Cut Water to Farms and Bay Area Cities



California's State Water Resources Control Board voted to approve the Bay-Delta plan, which will re-allocate billions of gallons of water from farms and cities to enhance the environment. Authorities say that a dwindling fish populations justify this action.

The state plans to double the present water flow to the ocean during dry periods, which will cause an estimated 40% reduction of water to the San Francisco area. A torrent of lawsuits are expected. The Trump administration, which has spoken in favor of more water for farms, has threatened to sue over the Bay Delta Plan. -GEG

The cities and towns hit this week with stiff demands to reduce water use, including San Francisco, say they'll work with state regulators to meet the charge, but they're also looking at the possibility of lawsuits.

The State Water Resources Control Board approved a far-reaching plan Wednesday to improve the health of California's rivers and fish by limiting the amount of water that dozens of communities take from four major waterways.

While the plan leaves room for negotiating the extent of the

water reductions, the agencies that draw from the San Joaquin River and its tributaries say legal action may be a necessary backstop in case they're forced to cut more than they can afford.

"At the end of the day, we do serve our customers and we have to do what's best for the community," said Samantha Wookey, spokeswoman for the Modesto Irrigation District, one of the state's biggest water suppliers and now subject to restrictions on the Tuolumne River.

San Francisco, which also relies on the Tuolumne River and faces cutbacks, has begun evaluating whether a lawsuit is appropriate, according to the city attorney's office.

Under the state plan, San Francisco residents and businesses could face reductions of 40 percent or more during prolonged dry periods, according to estimates from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.

The aim of the state water board is to prevent the collapse of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. The sprawling estuary, which serves as a hub of state water supplies and is a vital conduit for threatened salmon, has suffered from too little water and too much contamination amid heavy pumping.

While the water board's plan would saddle water users with restrictions to boost flows into the delta, regulators introduced leniency Wednesday in an effort to head off litigation, which would result in years of delay in the plan's implementation. The board stipulated that it will attempt to integrate proposals by water agencies to trade habitat restoration for smaller water reductions.

It appears, though, the board's strategy may not have worked.

Ever since the water board began updating its plan a decade ago, it has had to maneuver a path between water users who don't want limits on their draws and fishermen and

environmentalists who want substantial caps.

The conservation community also presents a threat for legal action, with many having committed to suing if the environmental safeguards approved Wednesday are weakened.

The Bay Delta Plan calls for maintaining an average of 40 percent of the natural flow of the San Joaquin River and its tributaries during peak spring runoff. Currently, the flows average 20 percent or less because of diversions. Sometimes the waterways dry up entirely.

Read full article here...

**San Francisco Voted to Allow
Water to Flow into Ocean, in
the Name of
Environmentalism, Instead of
Sending it to Farmers to
Spite President Trump**



California: The Bay Delta Plan that would require the rivers in the San Joaquin watershed to maintain 40% of unimpeded flow into the ocean from February to June, more than twice the current amount of water, which would decrease the amount of water to farmers. The city of San Francisco voted for the Bay Delta Plan to spite President Trump as he threatened to sue if it was implemented, as it would interfere with the operation of key reservoirs owned by the federal government in the San Joaquin Valley. If this plan is implemented, it will drive up water rates as the city is compelled to seek out new, pricey supplies, such as desalination.

Update: Surprisingly, San Francisco Mayor London Breed sided with conservatives and vetoed the Supervisors' unanimous vote for water restrictions that would affect the city's own water supply.

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted unanimously 11-0 on Tuesday to endorse California's new Bay-Delta plan, which will restrict the city's water supply. The reason: to spite President Donald Trump's water policy.

The State Water Resources Control Board is set to vote November 7 – the day after the midterm election – on a new plan that will require the rivers in the San Joaquin watershed to maintain 40% of unimpeded flow levels from February to June, more than twice the current amount of water. That means taking more water from farmers – and from the city of San Francisco itself, which relies on water from the Hetch Hetchy reservoir on the Tuolumne River.

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, which is technically independent from the politicians on the Board of Supervisors, has opposed the Bay-Delta plan. Earlier this month, the *San Francisco Chronicle* noted earlier this month that the commission was “concerned that forfeiting water, under the state plan, would prompt mandatory water cuts and drive up water rates as the city is compelled to seek out new,

pricey supplies, such as desalination.”

But then Supervisor Aaron Peskin introduced a resolution disapproving of the commission’s approach, and backing the Bay-Delta plan. The resolution is non-binding, but supervisors do have leverage over the commission’s budget.

The *Chronicle* noted Tuesday that the supervisors specifically wished to send a message to President Trump, after he issued an executive memorandum Oct. 19 that favored farmers over environmental interests in water policy:

An early version of the resolution explicitly says the city must divorce itself from the Trump administration and its congressional allies such as Rep. Jeff Denham, R-Turlock, who’s branded the state plan a “water grab.” The Trump administration has vowed to sue the state if the so-called Bay-Delta plan goes forward, saying it would interfere with the operation of key reservoirs owned by the federal government in the San Joaquin Valley.

“Under the cloud of climate change denial and anti-science populism, the debate around the Bay-Delta Plan has transcended the realm of rational, environmental discourse toward a political and populist, anti-conservation rally cry, fueled by the strategic lobbying of a federal Republican administration aiming to destabilize California’s status as a Democratic stronghold,” the resolution says.

The board toned down that language in the final version passed Tuesday afternoon, opting for a resolution that read in part, “President Trump and his administration have overtly politicized matters better addressed through peer-reviewed, relevant science and innovative solutions to regional water use.”

The city council of Palo Alto in Silicon Valley took a similar vote in August, defying its own water department and backing

the Bay-Delta plan as a protest to the Trump administration – even though it meant losing precious water.

Read full article here...