

October 22, 2024

Courtney Tyler  
Clerk to the Board  
State Water Resources Control Board  
P.O. Box 100  
Sacramento, California 95814-0100  
[Board.Clerk@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Board.Clerk@waterboards.ca.gov)

Re: Support for the Putah-Cache Creek Watershed Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Project

Chair E. Joaquin Esquivel,

We encourage the State Water Board to support the ***Putah-Cache Creek Watershed Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Project (Project)*** as a locally led effort for recovering salmon. We strongly support this ***Project*** because it is an innovative plan designed to increase climate resiliency through recharge and achieve more active conjunctive water management, and provides benefits to communities, farms, businesses, the environment, and the public of Yolo, Lake, and Solano Counties. Additionally, the ***Project*** aligns with 13 of the [California Water Resilience Portfolio](#) actions and will contribute to the recovery objectives of the *Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes*, if approved by the State Water Board.

The vision of Yolo County is to provide an active and productive buffer of farmland and open space separating the Bay Area from Sacramento. The County actively protects productive farmland from development and has collaborated for decades with local cities to direct virtually all new development to existing urban areas. Also, in collaboration with local cities and UC Davis, the County led preparation of the Yolo Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan, which focuses on realizing the potential of working landscapes to contribute meaningfully to species conservation and recovery. In these and other ways, Yolo County's proven track record of innovative collaboration is why its agricultural industry has been at the forefront of risk management and continues to provide responsible food for the region and the world.

Like many other counties and other local agencies across the state, we remain concerned with the State Water Board's consideration of a 55% unimpaired flow into the Delta in connection with the Bay-Delta Plan update. This outcome would redirect significant amounts of water away from, and adversely impact, the agricultural economy in the Sacramento River Basin. Within Yolo County, this simplified approach of requiring more flow from the Cache Creek watershed will result in a substantial amount of water waste with nominal benefit to the Bay-Delta. While we are continuing efforts to resolve our concerns with state led projects proposed in connection with *Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes*, we unreservedly support the locally led ***Project*** as a strong example of the reasons why locally led conservation efforts—of which it is one of many—are superior to a 55% unimpaired flow alternative.

In Yolo County (and nearby Lake County), this would be devastating to the economy and the environment, adversely affecting the availability of critical water supplies for the Cities of Davis, West Sacramento, and Woodland, UC Davis, and rural, disadvantaged communities, along with farms, wildlife refuges for birds and many other species, salmon and other fisheries, and recreation. In 2023, the gross value of agricultural production in Yolo County was almost \$902M. Agricultural viability also depends on warehousing and distribution, food processing technology and biotechnology research and development, and the University of California, Davis. The unimpaired flow approach would have a significant impact on Yolo County's groundwater supplies and would result in fallowing of productive farmland and overdraft of the aquifer triggering non-compliance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

The **Project** will optimize flow contributions to Putah Creek to ensure success and realize the benefits of increased salmon spawning opportunities. Since the 2000 Putah Creek Accord, native fish have returned to Putah Creek, including spawning salmon first noticed in 2015. Putah Creek is now a stable, flourishing ecosystem, and considered a success model for other degraded water systems in California and beyond. Additionally, the **Project** will assist the agricultural economy in Yolo County to effectively manage future changes in climate by capturing and storing excess rainfall and runoff to groundwater recharge. We are supportive of the diversion of excess winter flows in Cache Creek to mitigate for downstream flooding impacts and increase groundwater recharge in the County.

In addition to contributing to the recovery of anadromous fishery, mitigating downstream flooding impacts, and increasing groundwater recharge in the County, the **Project** will

- protect groundwater supplies of rural communities,
- protect groundwater dependent ecosystems,
- prevent subsidence, and
- maintain economic and environmental benefits of agriculture and working lands.

We support a healthy Delta, but we are concerned that the unimpaired flow approach proposed by the State Water Board will redirect impacts upstream into the Sacramento River Basin and will likely fail to achieve its goal of protecting Delta water quality. We believe that creative and innovative local approaches to conjunctive water management will better serve the Sacramento River Basin, and Yolo and other nearby Counties, and more effectively protect Delta water quality. We encourage the State Water Board to embrace an approach that achieves water quality goals for the Delta without detrimentally impacting the local economies within the region.

Sincerely,

Lucas Frerichs, Chair  
Yolo County Board of Supervisors