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Subject: Long-Term North to South Water Transfers

Date: Sun, 27 Feb 2011 13:30:20 -0800

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To: <bhubbard@usbr.gov>

CC: <info@aqualliance.net>

Although there is no detail yet available on the proposed "Project," I am submitting a formal Comment to express my alarm about what I understand that Project to be. I am a citizen of Chico:

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My wife and I moved to Chico about seven and a half years ago, lured here in no small part by the natural beauty of the area. Our outdoor activities are very important to us, including hiking and bird watching, and they invariably involve the rivers, creeks, and streams which are so integral to that natural beauty and which interact in a fundamental way with the aquifer(s). Our drinking water comes from the California Water Service Company via pumping from the aquifer. So it is natural for us to be concerned about a Project which could impact in a major negative way our groundwater supply. Over the years, we have attended many informational meetings on groundwater issues put on by Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District, the Bureau, Butte Environmental Council, the League of Women Voters, and others, so we understand how poorly the aquifer is understood and how important its maintenance is to us.

We also understand there are powerful economic forces at work to secure more of the water from the Northstate to support the population and agriculture of the southern parts of California. The population of Southern California is a presumably immutable fact, and it is also a fact that they need water – it is fortunate that impressive water conservation measures have been undertaken there to mitigate somewhat the impact of that population. A bigger factor as far as water is concerned is the factory agriculture in Southern California, which in many cases involves crops which are largely inappropriate for the climate there. The clamor for more water from the north to support this agriculture would, in a rational world, be turned towards a focus on helping transition our culture to consumption of locally produced crops and towards growing crops that better fit the local climate.

But as for the proposed Project to transfer surface water over 10 years and “make that up” by increasing pumping from the aquifer: The environmental review for the Project must include a comprehensive monitoring and mitigation plan for the inevitable adverse impacts of increased groundwater removal, and it must be available for public review and comment in a timely manner. Prior to proceeding, the Bureau should also explain how the Project will not cause irreversible subsidence, will not adversely impact existing wells by lowering the water table and introducing contaminants, will not adversely affect flows in rivers, streams, and creeks, will not be harmful to fish and other aquatic species, and why instead of enabling this water transfer, the Project shouldn’t involve something that would actually improve the water situation.

The Bureau is seemingly trying to defuse potential Northstate public outrage by emphasizing that it is merely trying to facilitate *voluntary* water transfers from “willing sellers” to willing buyers. The notion that current holders of water rights *own* Northstate water and can pillage the aquifer to make a profit on surface water just beggars belief. A Federal Project should rather be facilitating a future where sustainable practices were the rule, rather than a distant dream.