

RTD Press Teleconference  
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Good morning:

This 4th of July I noticed that 30% more water was flowing under the Pohono Bridge in Yosemite Valley than was flowing down the San Joaquin River as it entered the Delta. When one of California's great rivers can be reduced to a rivulet, it speaks volumes about state priorities.

As Santayana observed, "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," and the past actions of tunnel proponents are likely indicators of their future actions.

More than 4 decades after passage of the federal and state clean water and endangered species acts:

- More than 40,000 miles of California waterways are so polluted they cannot support identified beneficial uses, and
- 83% of California's freshwater fishes are either extinct or at risk of becoming so.

More than a century following codification of our present water rights system, California is in the midst of a water supply crisis.

And all of these things could have been largely prevented or greatly minimized had we but complied with the laws and regulations we enacted.

We pass laws and then ignore and mock them. And subsequently complain about the consequences.

Between 1967 and last winter, the Delta's pelagic species; striped bass, Delta smelt, longfin, American shad, splittail and threadfin declined by 99.7, 97.8, 99.9, 91.9, 98.5 and 97.8 percent, respectively.

So far this year, all of the surveys and trawls reveal further catastrophic declines. For some species like Delta smelt, we can name the survivors rather than count them.

In fact, the recently released Towntnet Survey Index for Delta smelt was the lowest in history: 0.0. And the latest 20-mm Survey found only a single smelt in 135 trawls at 45 locations throughout the Delta.

Since 1967, in-river natural production of Sacramento River winter-run, spring-run and fall-run Chinook salmon have decline by 98.2, 99.3 and 92.1 percent, respectively, far below the doubling levels mandated by state and federal law.

Last year, relaxation of temperature compliance in the upper Sacramento led to the loss of 95% of winter-run, 98% of fall-run and virtually all of the spring-run year classes.

Examining the data, comparable losses can be expected this year.

The present Bay-Delta standards were developed 20 years ago following a severe 5-year drought. Explicit standards were established for critical years – recognizing that fish would suffer.

In the initial years of the present, like previous droughts, the Projects delivered near normal water supplies thereby drawing down reservoirs to dangerously low levels.

In 2013, a dry year, the State Water Board allowed the Projects to operate to critical year standards. In both 2014 and 2015, the Board simply tossed the critical year standards in the trash bin.

According to the Board's statistics, this year it reduced water to protect Delta fisheries and agriculture by 78%, while increasing water for exports by 46%.

Nothing has occurred during this present drought that hasn't been repeated ad nauseam during previous droughts.

The exception being that fisheries are not simply facing declines: they're now facing extinction. Fallowed fields can be replanted after the drought: extinct fisheries are forever lost.

Suffice it to say that fisheries, public trust resources and Delta farmers have grievously suffered from the habitual refusal to enforce and comply with minimal water quality standards – drought or not.

And reductions of millions of acre-feet of water diverted under the Delta will dramatically exacerbate existing conditions.

Given the history of the last four decades, any promises or assurances that the Governor or California WaterFix can provide aren't worth the paper they're printed on.