

Statement of
The Honorable Brett R. Barbre
Director, Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC)
&
Director, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) representing
Municipal Water District of Orange County

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Chairman Fleming, Ranking Member Huffman, distinguished Members of the Committee, my name is Brett Barbre and I am an elected Director of the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC) and am an appointed Director of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MET) as one of four representatives from MWDOC. I appreciate the opportunity to be here this morning to share a few thoughts regarding the impact on the Southern California water supply due to the lack of resolution with the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta.

We have a water system in California that is broken under the weight of environmental problems and regulations, lack of investment and outright political obstructionism. When the rains finally returned to California this winter and the rivers began to rise in Northern California, our water system in the Bay Delta had to decrease pumping rather than take advantage of the opportunity to store as much as possible for future use. In years past we started to face these kinds of restrictions after the projects began taking delta smelt. However, this year the restrictions kicked in before the projects took a single smelt as the regulations this year say we could face even greater restrictions if we take 56 fish. That is right, 56 smelt. And bear in mind that more than 3,000 smelt are routinely taken for research and sampling purposes.

The California water system has been living off the investments of past generations, and the bill of inaction is coming due.

There have been significant investments over the past generation at the local level, most notably in Southern California within the Metropolitan Water District service area. But statewide the system is largely the same one we had more than a generation ago even though the state population has more than doubled. Keep in

mind that the planning for the State Water Project began in 1956 and the first deliveries to Southern California occurred in 1971 – nearly 45 years ago.

As a representative of an agency that receives water from both the Colorado River and the California State Water Project, it is fair to compare and contrast the experience on both systems.

While the California system has four times the flows of the Colorado River, it has less than half the storage. This disparity has significant and demonstrable impacts. The Colorado system has essentially been in drought conditions this entire century yet the system has gone for more than 15 years without any shortage conditions because its storage system can hold four times the average runoff of the basin. When big storms have occurred this century on the Colorado, the system can capture every drop. However, when big storms happen in Northern California, we have seen up to 80 to 90 percent of the water coming into the Delta going out to the ocean – not exactly a “beneficial use” of fresh water.

What we need in California is a new generation in investment and a new management ethic that doesn't look for reasons to deny water for the economy.

The design of the water system in the Delta needs to be improved so that water can be captured in the northern Delta and transported to the aqueduct system in the southern Delta. We must remember that this supply is vital for the economies of the Silicon Valley, the Central Valley and \$1 trillion Southern California economy.

Versions of this improvement have been around for decades, and it is beyond time to make this system investment. As far back as 1973 when the Delta Environmental Advisory Committee was formed, it was determined that a properly designed facility that eliminates the need to use the Delta as a conveyance facility would guarantee that the affected environments would be adequately protected.

Governor Jerry Brown's current administration is moving forward with this project, known as California WaterFix and while it is part of a solution, it is not THE solution. We simply need to regain our ability to capture water when it is wet so the economy has supplies when it is dry. We have lost that ability for various environmental and regulatory reasons and strangling the economy's water supply is not good for the environment; it is not good for anyone; it puts at risk our nation's food security.

The basic reason for California WaterFix is straightforward. We need intakes in two different places in the Delta, north and south, in order to reliably divert water and avoid conflicts with endangered species; we need a flexible, modern system.

The California WaterFix would build three new intakes in the northern Delta and a tunnel pipeline system to move the water to the aqueducts. The California WaterFix does not solve all of the state's water problems but it would eliminate a bottleneck in the heart of the statewide system. California will need to continue to develop more local supplies such as what we have done in Southern California.

In 1977, which was the driest year on record, the State Water Project was able to deliver 400,000 af of water to MWD; in 2014 we received 100,000. We seem to be going backwards. Just since January 1, 2016, over 200,000 af of water has been allowed to flow out to the Pacific Ocean which ordinarily would be stored for later use. This is simply unacceptable.

Across the state we need more storage, north of the Delta and south of the Delta. Storing water away in the wet years means more for both the economy and the environment in dry years. We have long tried to run this water system with inadequate storage and the problem reveals itself every time it stops raining. We need to stop fooling ourselves that we can be the 7th largest economy in the world without a world class water system that is up to today's challenges.

The Municipal Water District of Orange County supports both Mr. Valadao's HR 2898 and Senator Feinstein's S 2533 in hopes that a FORMAL conference committee will be convened so an equitable solution to the benefit of all Californian's can be reached.

This concludes my statement and will be happy to respond to any questions.

Thank you.