

**ERIN HANNIGAN**  
District 1, Vice-Chair (707) 553-5363  
**MONICA BROWN**  
District 2, (707) 784-3031  
**WANDA WILLIAMS**  
District 3, (707) 784-6136  
**JOHN M. VASQUEZ**  
District 4, (707) 784-6129  
**MITCH MASHBURN**  
District 5, Chair, (707) 784-6030

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



# SOLANO COUNTY

**BILL EMLÉN**  
County Administrator  
(707) 784-6100

675 Texas Street, Suite 6500  
Fairfield, CA 94533-6342  
Fax (707) 784-6665

[www.solanocounty.com](http://www.solanocounty.com)

September 4, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

### **RE: SUPPORT, A Better Pathway for the Bay-Delta**

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, representing Solano County in the Sacramento River Basin, we encourage you and your administration to support the Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (previously known as voluntary agreements) and the associated benefits for communities, farms, businesses, the environment, and the public.

We specifically urge the State Water Board to identify the Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes alternative in its final Staff Report and forthcoming program of implementation as the State Water Board's best pathway for updating the Sacramento/Delta portions of the Bay-Delta Plan.

This approach is directly aligned with Solano County's priority to protect the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the Suisun Marsh.

We remain concerned with the other alternative, the State Water Board's proposal for a 55 percent unimpaired flow into the Delta. This simplistic approach would go beyond what is needed for environmental needs and would result in a substantial amount of water being put out to the ocean without any benefit. This in turn would be devastating to both the economy and the environment in the Solano County, adversely affecting the availability of critical water for cities and rural communities (some of which are disadvantaged), farms, wildlife, salmon and other fisheries, and recreation.

We support a healthy Delta, but the unimpaired flow approach proposed by the State Water Board will redirect impacts upstream and will likely fail to achieve its goal of protecting Delta water quality, nor have a significant beneficial impact on salmon.

The potential impacts to this region are not abstract, we experienced dry year impacts in Solano County in 2022. For context, within the region, hundreds of square miles of farmland was fallowed in 2022. A report by the University of California Davis estimated that there was \$1.3 billion in lost economic value, 14,300 jobs lost, \$732 million in lost labor income, and devastated supply chains (see the October 27, 2022, Congressional Record, Recognizing the University of California, Davis Report on "Drought Ravaging California's Sacramento Valley").

More specifically, the "unimpaired flow" approach will have two significant effects in our region:

- Evacuate critical water in storage and prevent the diversion of water throughout our region, which will significantly affect precious water supplies for all these purposes. This is particularly true in dry

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years like we have seen this decade, where water available in storage is critical to helping Californians get through these challenging times. In other words, we will go backward under the State Water Board approach-not forward-in our efforts to better prepare for the next drought in California.

- Less surface water available will lead to significant additional groundwater pumping throughout the region, which will make our efforts to implement sustainable groundwater management envisioned under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) more difficult. In our region, the groundwater resources are currently sustainable, and we will continue to work hard with other local agencies to assure that our precious groundwater resources remain sustainable into the future. The State Water Board proposal will make our collective efforts to achieve groundwater sustainability more difficult if not impossible.

In summary, we encourage your administration to abandon the flawed "unimpaired flow" approach instead, we recommend that you pursue an integrated approach in the Agreements to support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes where water is used for a specific environmental purpose that is compatible with important flood protection and other water uses in the region. We believe that this 21st century approach to water management will better serve the Sacramento River Basin and more effectively protect Delta water quality. We encourage your administration to embrace an approach that achieves your water quality goals for the Delta without redirecting impacts to the Sacramento River Basin.

Sincerely,



Mitch Mashburn, Chair  
Solano County Board of Supervisors

**CC:**

Ann Patterson, Office of the Governor  
Emiko Burchill, Office of the Governor  
Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, CA Office of Natural Resources  
Yana Garcia, Secretary, CA Environmental Protection Agency  
Karen Ross, Secretary, CA Department of Food and Agriculture  
Karla Nemeth, Director, CA Department of Water Resources  
Chuck Bonham, Director, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Joaquin Esquivel, Board Chair, CA State Water Resource Board  
Eric Openheimer, Director, CA State Water Resources Control Board  
The Honorable Bill Dodd, California State Senator  
The Honorable Lori D. Wilson, California State Assemblymember  
The Honorable Solano County Board of Supervisors  
James Bezek, Director of Resource Management  
Misty Kaltreider, Water and Natural Resources Program Manager, Solano County  
Paragon Government Relations, Washington D.C.  
Karen Lange, SYASL Partners, Inc., Sacramento