



THE
TRUST
for
PUBLIC
LAND



August 21, 2013

Assemblymember Anthony Rendon, Chair
Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0063

Dear Chairman Rendon:

As you continue discussions on a revised Water Bond, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) and The Trust for Public Land (TPL) would like to reiterate comments we recently provided on the Water Bond Working Group's Principles. As a State agency and non-profit conservation group doing work in California's principal watershed, we believe it is imperative that source watersheds are included in any water bond or Framework designed to ensure water quality and supply for the State of California.

The region served by the SNC represents a 25 million acre area of statewide significance as it is the source of more than 60% of California's developed water supply and up to 50% of the water that flows into the Delta. A new water bond should strive to provide a safe, reliable water supply that meets the needs of all users and is resilient enough to survive disruptive events - extreme weather, large, damaging wildfire, flood, drought, or earthquake - and continue to thrive. Failure to include investments that protect and restore the source of water would be a significant omission in a comprehensive package of solutions for California's water issues.

Our water system is large, complex, and interconnected. Source watersheds are the keystone of the natural infrastructure that collects, connects, filters, regulates and transports the State's freshwater through the interconnected system over time. While much of our precipitation falls and is stored in the less populated, forested mountains of the Sierra Nevada/Cascades during the winter months, most of the state's water use occurs in late spring, summer, and early fall in the agricultural areas below the Delta and heavily populated urban areas along the coast. In essence, the source watersheds act as natural reservoirs for California, capturing fresh water where it falls and storing it for distribution through the natural system later in the year.

Sadly, the health of Sierra Nevada/Cascades forests, meadows and streams are in decline, putting the primary source of water in California at risk. Large, intense wildfires threaten the ability of forests to absorb and retain precipitation for release later in the year. Mercury from legacy mining activities in the Sierra Nevada continues to drift out of the mountains and in to the Delta and the San Francisco Bay contaminating the very hub of our water conveyance system. Investing in natural infrastructure, such as improving forest and watershed health, restoring meadows and streams in the upper watersheds, addressing water quality issues such as mercury contamination, preserving lands to prevent conversion to other uses and reducing the risk of large damaging fires are essential to ensuring water supply and quality for all California communities.

To achieve these ends, please consider the following suggestions on the Framework (changes are highlighted):

VI. Protecting Rivers, Lakes, Streams and Watersheds (\$1B)

A. Purpose: **Environmental and** Economic Benefits of Watersheds, Fishery & Instream Flow

B. Funding

1. Broad Range of Activities – watersheds, wetlands, water quality
2. Remove Barriers to Fish Passage
3. Collaboration with Federal Gov't on Anadromous Fish Protection/Salmon
- 4. Protection and Restoration of source watersheds**

VII. Climate Change Preparedness & Regional Self-Reliance for Water (\$1B) add:

B. Funding

3. Specific Program Allocations within Integrated Regional Water Management
d) Protection and restoration of source watersheds

VIII. Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Sustainability (\$1B)

B. Describe programs broadly and include **protection and restoration of the source of fresh water that flows through the Delta**

The SNC is a state agency uniquely positioned to help achieve upper watershed protection and restoration goals in support of water sustainability for the state. The SNC has successfully awarded more than \$50 million in Proposition 84 grants for the protection and restoration of rivers, lakes, and streams in Sierra Nevada watersheds and has established strong partnerships with numerous agencies, non-profits, and tribes in the Region to complete a variety of projects focused on protecting the State's water supply. We welcome the opportunity to continue to be a part of the solutions necessary to help the State achieve its long-term water reliability goals.

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Thank you for your efforts to create a comprehensive water bond of value to all of California and for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Jim Branham
Executive Officer
Sierra Nevada Conservancy



Rico Mastrodonato
Senior Government Relations Manager
The Trust for Public Land