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March 16, 2015

Jacob McQuirk  
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Email:DWREDBCOMMENTS@water.ca.gov

COMMENTS ON EMERGENCY DROUGHT BARRIERS  
MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Dear Mr. McQuirk:

I have lived in Discovery Bay since 2000 and have been boating on the Delta for nearly 50 years. We currently have a 32-foot Nordic Tug trawler and belong to three active yacht clubs or associations. Two of these, Coyote Point Yacht Club and the San Francisco Bay Area Nordic Tug Association, are based on San Francisco Bay. We travel from the Delta to the Bay many times a year, and we always use False River, as do many boats.

**The mitigated negative declaration is inadequate and does not disclose significant adverse environmental impacts. I request that you prepare a full Environmental Impact Report.**

Recreational boating is a million-dollar industry in the Delta. I am insulted that you thought it worth less than three pages in the Mitigated Negative Declaration (p.3-119-121). After spending three paragraphs -- one-third of the entire paltry section -- discussing marinas, boating use and the 6.4 million boating-related Delta visitor days, how can you conclude that *"the proposed project will not have a substantial adverse effect on recreation because public notices would be posted, temporary boat transfer ramps would be provided to facilitate navigation, alternative routes would be available and the proposed project would be a limited size and of short duration."*

For many boats, False River is the pathway that connects the Bay and the Delta. Blocking False River will have a significant impact on recreational boating and on the marine economy, as well as on safety.

There are only two possible alternative routes for boats coming from the South Delta and its many marinas, especially from Discovery Bay and Bethel Island.

- One is to use Old River (East False River) to connect to the San Joaquin River. This is a narrow and poorly marked passageway bounded by shallow water. We estimate this would add about three hours to our normal four-hour passage between Discovery Bay and the newly-refurbished Pittsburg Municipal Marina.
- The other alternative is to go down West False River to Fisherman's Cut, very close to the proposed rock dam. Currents in Fisherman's Cut can be strong and it shallows and narrows at the north end. Our boat travels at 8 knots, and we do not feel we could transit Fisherman's Cut safely except at slack before ebb, making Fisherman's Cut an impractical alternative. A dam might make currents even stronger.

The end result? We and other boaters would limit our trips to Antioch and Pittsburg marinas, impacting them economically. San Francisco Bay-based boats will tend to avoid Bethel Island and marine businesses there, impacting them economically.

The project is not of "short duration," when it means losing the entire spring, summer and fall boating season (May 1 to November 15 or longer).

- The rock dams are said to be temporary, but what enforcement is there to see that they are removed in October/November? What if there is no funding for removal? What if winter storms come before the dams are removed, and water backs up against the dam. Will it undercut levees on Bradford and Jersey islands? What about the impact on Taylor Slough and on Bethel Island?

If funds are scarce, and the dams to be reinstalled in May, what incentive is there to remove them in November (taking 60 days that could run into January). The thinking could be "why not just make them permanent?"

It is said that the purpose of these dams is to prevent increased salinity in the central Delta, where Sacramento River water flows south towards the Tracy pumping plants. Would salty water from San Francisco Bay not flow on up the San Joaquin River and into the south Delta via Old River or Connection Slough? Will this revive calls for "gates" or dams as proposed several years ago, further impeding recreational navigation?

Then, as now, the engineers appear to have little understanding of the types of boats that use Delta waterways. The proposal to trailer boats around the dam at Steamboat Slough is as impractical now as it was then, during the discussion of gates at Old River.

- Boat ramps are proposed only on Steamboat Slough and only for vessels up to 24 feet and up to 10,000 pounds. We are 32 feet and weigh 14,550 pounds.

The project also raises safety concerns. Northerly winds can kick up along the San Joaquin River north and east of the Antioch Bridge. False River offers a refuge; without

it boats will be forced to stay on the river in the shipping channel in an area with a wide area of shallow water.

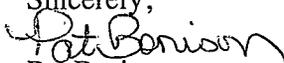
Last year we had what could have been a catastrophic mechanical problem and began taking on water. We were able to anchor in False River and wait for help to come from Antioch. Had False River been blocked, we would have been forced to hover in or near the shipping channel and possibly be in the way of freighters going to or from Stockton.

The section on recreation cites boating statistics that are 15 years old. As a boater and Discovery Bay resident since 2000, I can tell you that the number of boats – especially large cruising boats in the 30-, 40- and 50-foot range – has significantly increased.

The amount of water weed – egeria dense, water hyacinth and others – has also increased significantly. It would seem that water backed up against a dam at False River would provide an excellent breeding ground for these pesky plants.

The analysis of the impacts of the three dams is insulting to boaters and woefully incomplete. The Mitigated Negative Declaration cries out for an Environmental Impact Report to assess the true impacts, to boaters, to Delta farmers and to the environment.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
  
Pat Borison