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Governor

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Dear water district leaders,

Thank you for your engagement over the last several years to develop a Voluntary Agreement (VA) to improve conditions for fish and wildlife in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and its major rivers, through a commitment to create habitat and increase flows while providing regulatory certainty to water users. Your collaboration and hard work have been truly appreciated.

We all recognize that a successful VA among water users and state and federal agencies must withstand legal and scientific scrutiny. This VA will be submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) as a proposed pathway to implement its update to the San

Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Water Quality Control Plan (Bay-Delta Plan). In that process, the VA will be subject to third-party scientific peer review and environmental analysis pursuant to the Water Code and the California Environmental Quality Act. The public will also have the opportunity to participate through the State Water Board's public proceedings.

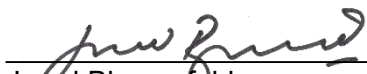
Given the need for a strong, durable VA, our state team has worked together with waters users to secure certain thresholds of increased water flows and habitat improvements necessary to make a VA scientifically defensible. Meeting these thresholds is essential to enable a VA that can be approved by the State Water Board as a pathway to implement the Bay-Delta Plan.

These thresholds of needed flow and habitat have been clearly communicated over the last two years by our state team, and we have worked together with you to explore how these thresholds can be met. In fact, we paused discussions among all parties during this summer and early fall to allow for more time for the proposals by the San Joaquin River tributaries to develop. However, at this point it is clear that despite considerable efforts, proposed voluntary actions by water agencies on the San Joaquin River tributaries have fallen short of needed flow and habitat improvements, and viable proposals are not being offered at this time.

Accordingly, at this point, we will focus our efforts on advancing a VA with the Sacramento River basin water users and water agencies who contract with the State and Federal water projects. On a dual track, we will ask the State Water Board to resume all activities necessary to implement the flow objectives established by the 2018 Bay-Delta Plan for the Lower San Joaquin River and its three major tributaries, the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced rivers.

We continue to believe that collaboration, adaptive management, and voluntary agreements are the best way to ensure water resilience for California's communities, economy, and environment. Accordingly, we maintain hope that water agencies that utilize the San Joaquin River and its tributaries can become part of the VA. Specifically, we are including a provision in the VA to enable additional water agencies to join the agreement at a later date if they propose necessary levels of additional water flows and habitat. We stand ready and eager to collaborate with you on this important effort.

Sincerely,



Jared Blumenfeld  
Secretary  
California Environmental Protection Agency



Wade Crowfoot  
Secretary  
California Natural Resources Agency