

May 15, 2020

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Secretary of Interior
1849 C Street NW
Mail Stop #7328
Washington, DC 20420

Re: Voluntary Agreements

Dear Secretary Bernhardt,

In early February, we were on the brink in California water of a historic resolution of longstanding conflicts through comprehensive voluntary agreements that embrace collaboration and innovative solutions. Now more than ever, California needs your personal leadership in bringing all parties back to the table to complete the work of finishing the voluntary agreements. The voluntary agreements will improve water supply reliability, including for fish and wildlife and for urban and agricultural water users throughout the state.

The public wants a solution. Dozens of parties, along with the Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP) public water agencies, stand ready to begin implementation of voluntary agreements. However, differences between the CVP and SWP operations must be resolved before doing so, and preferably by state and federal experts, not the courts.

POLLING INDICATES STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE VOLUNTARY AGREEMENTS:

- Recent polling indicates that over 62 percent of California voters support the voluntary agreements knowing the agreements will result in physical improvements to fish habitat in the Bay-Delta and its vast watersheds. (Please see attachment regarding polling).

The Association of California Water Agencies, representing more than 450 California public water agencies, appreciates your team's commitment to the voluntary agreements as a new and better approach to improving the Bay-Delta ecosystem. Voluntary agreements remain the best alternative for providing certainty to over half of the state's population who depend on these water sources and for maintaining the

economic vitality of the Central Valley. Through the voluntary agreements, water agencies have pledged to contribute hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water, hundreds of millions of dollars, and an extensive series of restoration projects to enhance fish and wildlife habitat. With an extensive list of “no regrets” early implementation projects that could begin construction or otherwise be implemented within the next twelve to eighteen months, **voluntary agreements have the added co-benefit of immediately injecting tens of millions of dollars into the state’s economy at this critical time.** It is imperative that the Department of the Interior works to resolve differences between the SWP and CVP operations, many of which are most appropriately framed as hypotheses and can be tested through the voluntary agreement’s science program.

With California water policy at a defining moment, we urge your personal leadership to bring the state and federal governments and stakeholders back together to finish the critically important work of achieving an agreement that restores the Bay-Delta ecosystem and benefits our economy. ACWA stands ready to assist you and your team in realizing that outcome.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Eggerton", written in a cursive style.

Dave Eggerton
Executive Director

Attachment – Polling Infographic

cc: Honorable Members, California Congressional Delegation
The Honorable Brenda Burman, Commissioner, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
The Honorable Aurelia Skipwith, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services

California Voters Support Voluntary Agreements

62% SUPPORT

OPPOSE 9%

UNSURE 20%

A coalition of California interests including cities, conservation organizations, farmers, and state and federal agencies, are working on a set of voluntary agreements to improve fish and wildlife habitat in California's Bay-Delta and to ensure people and farms throughout the state have reliable water supplies. In general, **do you support or oppose such an approach?**

Enhance fish habitats



are more likely to **SUPPORT** voluntary agreements knowing they will make physical improvements to fish habitat in rivers and the Bay-Delta

Restore 60,000 acres



are more likely to **SUPPORT** voluntary agreements knowing they will provide the restoration of 60,000 acres of habitat for fish and wildlife

Advance a different approach



are more likely to **SUPPORT** knowing that voluntary agreements will take a different approach that includes the creation of new habitats for fish, applied science, and greater water supply reliability for people and farms

Reactivate historic floodplains



are more likely to **SUPPORT** voluntary agreements knowing that water will be released from reservoirs to coincide with natural fish movements and to restore historic floodplains that play an important role in the fish life cycle

Double the salmon population



are more likely to **SUPPORT** voluntary agreements knowing they will advance the goal of doubling California's salmon population by 2050

From Monday, March 9, 2020 to Sunday, March 15, 2020, Probolsky Research conducted a live-interviewer telephone and online survey among California Statewide voters. A total of 900 voters were surveyed (300 by telephone and 600 online). A survey of this size yields a margin of error of +/-3.3%, with a confidence level of 95%. Interviews were conducted with respondents on both landline (47%) and mobile phones (53%) and were offered in English (90%) and Spanish (10%) languages. Questions were randomized. Our sample was developed from voter data maintained by each of California's 58 county election officials and enhanced with publicly available consumer data. Probolsky Research applies a stratified random sampling methodology to ensure that the demographic proportions of survey respondents match the demographic composition of California voters.