



Merced residents deliver concerns about local drinking water quality and job loss to the State Water Board

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During an all-day hearing this week, a large cross section of the Merced community shared concerns about the far-reaching impacts of the state's Bay Delta Plan. Those concerns ranged from the impacts on Merced's drinking water quality to the devastating impacts the plan would have on the local economy.

The State Water Resources Control Board is moving forward with an enormous plan that calls for the diversion of Merced River water away from Merced and instead sends it north to the Bay Delta. There, the water will benefit other communities and farms. An [independent analysis](#) of state and local government records has shown the water diversion would result in the loss of more than \$230 million in economic activity and nearly 1,000 jobs. (To read the complete report, click [here](#)).

On Tuesday, several residents traveled to a State Water Board hearing to share a variety of concerns.

Robert Dylina, Chairman of the Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce and Manager of Envoy Mortgage, told the State Water Board that Merced is just now beginning to see economic improvement following the recession and housing collapse, which had put Merced in the national headlines in 2008 and 2009. The economic impacts of the Bay Delta Plan would be a significant blow to Merced's economic recovery, he said.

Fernando Aguilera, with the Merced Atlas Soccer Academy, delivered 800 letters to the board expressing concerns about the impacts the Bay Delta Plan will have on local drinking water quality. He further expressed concerns about the message being sent to local youth in a disadvantaged community.

"At nearly every direction they face, they are given a simple message: you can't do that – you are from Merced. They are constantly enticed to simply give up hope of a better future and give in to the negative influences around them," he said. "What am I supposed to tell them?"

Mike Carpenter, a partner at Leap-Carpenter-Kemps Insurance Agency, explained the ripple effect the Bay Delta Plan would have on local businesses such as his. Approximately 40 percent of the local insurance office's business is connected to agriculture production and processing, he said.

City of Merced's Economic Development Director Frank Quintero expressed concerns about meeting the water needs of future growth and commerce.

Several of those speaking about Merced's future water-needs noted that the community's housing prices will continue drawing new residents to the Valley as they are priced out of other markets, such as the Bay Area.

Multiple questions were raised about how new growth and commerce in Merced would be managed if the community loses its water supply. Unlike many other communities in the state, Merced does not have access to water supplied by the State and Federal water conveyance systems: the community depends entirely on groundwater for drinking. That [local groundwater](#) is replenished each year, in part, with water stored in Lake McClure. In total, MID's operations help contribute up to 140,000 acre feet of water into the local groundwater: that is the equivalent of more than one-tenth of Lake McClure's capacity of fresh water benefitting local groundwater quality and sustainability.

Tim Goodson owns and operates Calaveras Trout Farm, the second largest trout farm in the state. His fish are planted in lakes for anglers across California after being raised with Merced River water near the community of Snelling. On Tuesday, he told the State Water Board that the Bay Delta Plan impacts would have a crippling effect on water temperatures and his ability to produce trout for California anglers.

The State Water Board's purported need for the new water diversion is to support salmon and wildlife in the Bay Delta. In direct response, Merced Irrigation District has proposed the Merced River S.A.F.E. Plan, a multi-benefit approach that supports salmon and the local environment in the Merced area while protecting local water quantity and quality. To learn more, visit www.MercedRiverSAFEplan.org

The State Water Board will hold a public hearing in Merced on Dec. 19 at 9 a.m. at the Multi-Cultural Arts Center, 645 West Main St. To email State Water Board members directly or download letter templates, click [here](#).

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