



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**STATEWIDE INTERESTS URGE SACRAMENTO REGIONAL SANITATION DISTRICT TO
UPGRADE SEWAGE PLANT AND BE PART OF DELTA SOLUTION**

***Water Agencies Unite with Scientists, Government Agencies, Environmental, Agricultural and
Business Groups Urging Central Valley Regional Board to Approve Permit Requiring System Upgrade***

Sacramento, CA -- The State Water Contractors, a statewide association of 27 public water agencies from Northern, Central & Southern California, has joined with other public water agencies, scientists, government agencies, business, agricultural and environmental organizations throughout the state urging the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District (Sac Regional) to make much-needed facility upgrades that will reduce the amount of ammonia discharged into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta). Sac Regional has been the subject of intense media and stakeholder focus in the past year as new science emerged about the amount and negative impacts of ammonia, a byproduct of human waste, being released from its sewage plant directly into the Delta. Many believe that this is one of the primary causes of the declining Delta ecosystem.

One of the few remaining wastewater plants in the region that isn't utilizing modern treatment methods, Sac Regional has not upgraded its sewage plant since first constructed in 1982 and is operating under an expired permit from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board). The Regional Board, which is charged with enforcing regional water quality and human safety, is currently considering a new permit that would require Sac Regional to upgrade its system. Sac Regional is the largest discharger of wastewater into the Delta. Currently, about 14 tons of ammonium per day enters the Sacramento River from this facility.

"We are very pleased to see such diverse statewide interests all recognizing ammonia is a serious problem in Delta and collectively urging Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District to upgrade their outdated sewage plant," said Laura King Moon, assistant general manager for the State Water Contractors. "We urge the Central Valley Regional Board to move in a timely manner and adopt a new permit that will better protect public health and the ecosystem."

Dozens of organizations and leaders have written to the Regional Board regarding Sac Regional's ammonia issue and/or in support of the tentative permit currently under consideration, including the Delta Stewardship Council's Lead Scientist, California Department of Water Resources, California Department of Fish and Game, California Department of Public Health, San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, Association of California Water Agencies, The Nature Conservancy, Contra Costa Water District, California Farm Bureau Federation, Senator Dianne Feinstein and state legislators.

A compilation of initial quotes from stakeholders is included below.

The Regional Board will decide whether or not to approve the new permit recommended by staff at the December 2010 board meeting.

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WHAT STAKEHOLDERS ARE SAYING ABOUT SACRAMENTO REGIONAL'S OUTDATED SEWAGE PLANT

"It is my professional opinion that the total ammonia limits proposed in the tentative permit are justified based on the available science...Science supports the concept that there are multiple stressors affecting the Delta ecosystem but science also shows that the current nutrient loading (especially total ammonia) may be one of the most important of these stressors. To reverse the decline in the health of the Delta ecosystem it will take the combined efforts of many agencies to reduce the impact of these multiple stressors. Solutions addressing a single stressor such as increasing flows, reducing the population of an invasive species, or increasing available habitat are unlikely to be successful in isolation. There is no time like the present to start reducing the impact of total ammonia and other pollutants on the aquatic ecosystems of the Delta."

"The Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District contends that because of the significant dilution afforded by the flows of the Sacramento River, the plant should be allowed more lenient discharge limits than other wastewater treatment plants in the region. Evidence, however, points to discharge from the SRWTP affecting the composition of the phytoplankton of the Delta waterways, contributing to harmful algal blooms in the Delta, and influencing the aquatic plant community within the Delta. It is time to make the SRWTP a key component of the overall Delta solution by bringing current treatment into the 21st Century."

**Cliff Dahm, Lead Scientist
Delta Stewardship Council**

"Delta Lead Scientist Cliff Dahm, who advises the Council, has sent a memo advising me that the Proposed Permit is consistent with the best available science and, when implemented, should improve water equality and the Delta ecosystem... Personally, I agree with this conclusion by Dr. Dahm."

**Phillip Isenberg, Chair
Delta Stewardship Council**

"The Department of Water Resources (DWR) strongly supports the tentative permit prepared by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board) for the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District's (SRCS) discharge on the Sacramento River and the Delta...the tentative order would provide significant direct and indirect benefits to water quality in the Delta...There is a significant body of scientific evidence to support a reduction in nutrient and effluent loading to the Delta. We therefore support adoption of the proposed permit requirements contained in the Central Valley Water Board's tentative order."

**Gerald Johns, Deputy Director
California Department of Water Resources**

“The discharge appears to be contributing at least 30 percent of the pathogens detected in the receiving waters. The human origin of these pathogens renders them more hazardous to swimmers...The discharge is a controllable source, and the risk it poses may be abated by additional treatment...”

**Gary H. Yamamoto , Chief, Division of Drinking Water and Environmental Management
California Department of Public Health**

“DFG recommends that ammonia and nitrate be removed from the SRWTP effluent to ensure protection of aquatic life and supports the additional studies on nitrogen and ammonia included in the Order.”

**Carl Wilcox, Chief, Water Branch
California Department of Fish and Game**

“We believe that the current discharge from the Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant (SRWTP) discharge may be impairing the aquatic life beneficial use in Suisun Bay, and possibly upstream, by having a detrimental effect on primary productivity and phytoplankton species composition. SRWTP is the largest publicly-owned treatment plant in the Delta and is estimated to contribute up to 90 percent of the annual ammonia load to the Sacramento River (Jasby 2008)...In conclusion, we urge Region 5 to take all necessary actions to assure that Suisun Bay beneficial uses are fully protected.”

**Bruce H. Wolfe, Executive Officer
San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board**

“I have become convinced that the problems in the Delta are the result of multiple stressors – not just the pumps for water exports. These stressors include pesticides, ammonia, toxic contaminants and bacteria, invasive clams, predator fish, barriers to fish passage, and others...I look forward to working with you and the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District to complete the studies called for in the draft permit and implement necessary upgrades to the facility.”

**Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator**

“It is imperative that discharges of wastewater into this sensitive river reach in an estuary that is experiencing ecosystem collapse be subject to the most rigorous regulatory treatment standards. Inexplicably, for many years, Sacramento Regional’s wastewater plant has been exempted from requirements routinely applied to other wastewater treatment facilities in the region... For too long, Sacramento Regional has externalized the adverse costs of wastewater treatment to a degraded environment. For too long, the citizens of Sacramento have enjoyed low utility bills subsidized by the degradation of public trust assets owned in common by all Californians. Discharging pollutants into waters of the nation is a privilege, not a right. It is time for Sacramento residents to pay their fair share for enjoying that privilege.”

**Bill Jennings, Executive Director
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance**

“ACWA supports the Tentative Order to require SRCSD to implement advanced wastewater treatment. The most recent scientific research continues to support the conclusion that a combination of environmental stressors is causing the ecological crisis in the Delta. This includes increased nutrient loading which is adversely impacting the Delta food chain.

...We recognize the significant costs and planning process that will be associated with upgrading the SRWTP. But avoiding or further postponing this needed upgrade, or wasting precious water resources to support dilution, merely shifts larger burdens to future generations.”

**Timothy H. Quinn, Executive Director
Association of California Water Agencies**

“The Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant is one of the largest wastewater dischargers in the estuary. And it is one of a declining number of wastewater treatment plants that has not yet been required to upgrade to more advanced forms of treatment that would eliminate or substantially reduce levels of ammonium and other pollutants from entering the Sacramento River... There is growing evidence that ammonium inhibits the production of pelagic organisms, a critical food supply of native fisheries. We encourage you to review this evidence and factor it into your decision-making process.”

**Leo Winternitz, Delta Project Director
The Nature Conservancy**

“We urge the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board to require Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District to implement improved wastewater treatment as recommended in the Tentative Order as soon as possible...The growing body of data and scientific literature demonstrate that ammonia and other pollutants have significantly altered the Bay-Delta’s food web – contributing to the overall decline of the estuary’s health. It is clear that the only way to make long-term improvements in the Bay-Delta is to address all the factors that impact the Bay-Delta ecosystem – including limiting the amounts of ammonia and nitrate that are allowed to flow into the Bay-Delta and its waterways.”

**Joint Letter from
Alameda County Water District, Zone 7 Water Agency, Contra Costa Water District, Kern County Water Agency, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, San Luis & Delta Mendota Water Authority, Santa Clara Valley Water District, State & Federal Contractors Water Agency, State Water Contractors, Westlands Water District**

“On behalf of the Southern California Water Committee, I urge the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board to approve the Tentative Order to require Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District to implement advanced treatment of their wastewater...Every part of the state must do their part to help fix the Delta ecosystem...Water supplies that pass through the Delta are used by more than 25 million Californians. The water districts, businesses, farms and residents that we represent in Southern California all rely on dependable and high-quality supplies of water that pass through the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.”

**Richard Atwater, Executive Director
Southern California Water Committee**

“Despite severe water supply curtailments that are now in place to address endangered species such as Delta smelt, environmental problems in the Delta continue to worsen. Meanwhile, there is an ongoing threat to the water supplies that our communities and much of California depend upon. It is absolutely essential to address the Delta crisis effectively and comprehensively. It is with this need in mind that we urge you to follow the staff recommendation and approve new, advanced treatment standards for the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District wastewater facility.”

Joint Letter from Senators Alex Padilla, Tom Harman, Bob Huff, Mimi Walters, Jeff Denham, Mark Wyland, Ron Calderon, Bill Emerson, Dennis Hollingsworth, Roy Ashburn, Tony Strickland, Bob Dutton, Carol Liu, Gloria Negrete McLeod, Gilbert Decillo, Roderick D. Wright, Curren Price, Alan Lowenthal & Fran Pavely

“The Tentative Order correctly describes the growing list of emerging science showing that ammonia and other pollutants have significantly altered the Delta’s food web – contributing to the overall decline of the estuary’s health. Regulatory agencies have taken severe action against the state and federal water projects – slashing water exports from the Delta in an attempt to revive fish populations. It’s clear though that the only way to make long-term improvements is to address all the factors that impact the Delta ecosystem – including limiting the amounts of ammonia and other contaminants that are allowed to flow into the Delta and its waterways...

Farming and business organizations, public agencies and leaders throughout the state have been working diligently towards a comprehensive solution to the overall Delta crisis. Reducing ammonia, pathogens and other contaminants in the Delta is critical to that effort, which is why it is essential that your Board adopt the Tentative Order with more stringent interim ammonia limits.”

**Joint Letter from Agricultural Council of California,
California Poultry Federation, California Cotton Ginners and Growers Associations,
California Farm Bureau Federation, Western Growers Association
& Western United Dairymen**

“We recognize that there is an ongoing debate on the relative role of the many stressors on the Delta and the precise role that wastewater that contains ammonia is playing on the food web of the ecosystem. But there is no question that SRCSD is the largest wastewater discharger in the Delta. There is no question that its secondary method of treatment has not been improved in a generation. And there is no question that SRCSD is now releasing tons of ammonia into the Sacramento River every day...It will take a tremendous investment by water districts and other public funds in order to reverse the decline of the Delta and regain a reliable water supply system for California. The proposed treatment advances for this facility represent a very small fraction of the coming investments and are well within community affordability standards.”

Assemblymember Jean Fuller & Assemblymember Anna Caballero

“As you know, the SRCSD is the largest discharger of wastewater into the Delta. It is also one of the few remaining dischargers in the region that has yet to upgrade to advanced treatment technologies. This is not just a Sacramento issue. This permit is critical to the health of the Delta ecosystem. This permit is

also vital issue for VICA...Organizations, public agencies and leaders throughout the state have been working diligently towards a comprehensive solution to the overall Delta crisis. Reducing ammonia, nitrate, and pathogens in the Delta is critical to that effort, which is why it is essential that your Board adopt the Tentative Order with more stringent interim ammonia limits.”

**Daymond Rice/Chair & Stuart Waldman/President
Valley Industry & Commerce Association**

“The SRCSD facility is a significant contributor of ammonia to the Delta and has yet to undergo an upgrade to an advanced form of wastewater treatment...While costs must be considered, the current \$39.70 currently paid bimonthly by SRCSD customers (single family residential service) is substantially below that paid in many other areas of the state – and significantly less than the \$108 (bimonthly) currently paid by LVMWD customers. Given the large number of SRCSD customers and the ability to finance major infrastructure investments over 30 years (or more) it is logical to conclude that the needed improvements are necessary and affordable at rates that are still reasonable...”

We would urge Sacramento regulators, wastewater treatment operators and customers to not regard this as a “north vs south” issue; it is truly a California issue impacting the Delta, its complex ecosystems and all state residents downstream.”

**John Mundy, General Manager
Las Virgenes Municipal Water District**

“The SRCSD facility is the largest contributor of ammonia to the Delta and is also the largest that has yet to undergo an upgrade to an advanced form of wastewater treatment, which is common place for similar facilities in Southern California.”

**Eric Bergh, Acting General Manager
Calleguas Municipal Water District**

“Achieving the co-equal goals of ecosystem restoration and water supply reliability established in the package of Delta and water legislation enacted in November 2009 will require a comprehensive strategy. Adoption of the draft recommendation for the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District’s NPDES permit requiring reductions in ammonia and pathogen discharge is a critical step to making this goal a reality.”

**Paul Jones, General Manager
Irvine Ranch Water District**

The State Water Contractors is a statewide, non-profit association of 27 public agencies from Northern, Central and Southern California that purchase water under contract from the California State Water Project. Collectively the State Water Contractors deliver water to more than 25 million residents throughout the state and more than 750,000 acres of agricultural lands. For more information on the State Water Contractors, please visit www.swc.org.