

April 01, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
California Governor
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Submitted Via Email

RE: Reject Proposals to Loosen Water Protections

Dear Governor Newsom:

The undersigned organizations understand that California is facing an unprecedented public health crisis, and that many people are experiencing extreme hardship from healthcare to economic impacts due to COVID-19. But during this difficult time, we write to request that your administration maintain strong, protective regulatory processes that ensure safe and clean water for California's communities and ecosystems. We appreciate the State Water Board's commitment to "timely compliance by the regulated community [for] all Water Board orders and other requirements," as announced in the Board's March 20, 2020 COVID-19 Update. At the same time, however, we understand that regulated entities are still requesting that state agencies roll back protective measures related to water. We urge you to reject these requests and to remain committed to prioritizing public health and the availability of safe and clean water for all Californians.

As detailed in a March 18, 2020 letter sent to you from a number of environmental justice organizations, environmental organizations, and scientists, access to water is foundational for public health for all Californians, but even more so in vulnerable communities threatened by the possibility of water shutoffs during this time. We echo this point and emphasize that the quality of water is just as important. Requests to suspend safeguards that protect water quality and allow even a de minimis amount of water pollution should not be tolerated at any time. These requests are especially inappropriate during a pandemic that threatens both the health of all Californians and the stability of California's economy, and the spread of which can be limited by the routine use of clean water.

The state's regulatory processes are grounded in a commitment to ensure safe and clean water for Californians to drink, bathe, and cook with, and for California's fish and wildlife to thrive. These processes are indispensable during a public health emergency and require continued enforcement of regulations and permitting conditions to be effective against multiple threats.

One of these threats being the climate crisis, which continues to impact the water quality and public health conditions of many California communities. It is unnecessary to halt and/or roll back progress of these regulatory processes in an effort to prioritize and fight the current pandemic, the severity and magnitude of which we do not doubt. But state actions during a pandemic should not contradict the state's commitment to combat other public health threats. And Californians distressed by the increasing number of public health and economic concerns that COVID-19 presents should not have additional concerns about the quality of their water.

We appreciate the state's work during these challenging times, and look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Phillips
Director
Sierra Club California



Jennifer Clary
Water Program Manager
Clean Water Action



Barbara Barrigan-Parilla
Executive Director
Restore the Delta



Michael Clairborne
Senior Attorney
Leadership Counsel for Justice and
Accountability



Debi Ores
Senior Attorney
Community Water Center



Sean Bothwell
Executive Director
California Coastkeeper Alliance




Rachel Zwillinger
Water Policy Advisor
Defenders of Wildlife



John McManus
President
Golden State Salmon Association



Victoria Rome
Director of California Government Affairs
Natural Resources Defense Council



Dan Jacobsen
State Director
Environment California



Melissa Romero
Legislative Affairs Manager
California League of Conservation Voters



Bill Allayaud
Calif Director of Government Affairs
Environmental Working Group



Diana Vazquez
Policy Manager
California Environmental Justice Alliance



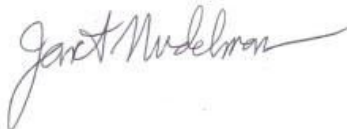
Laura Deehan
Public Health Advocate
CALPIRG



Emily Parker
Coastal and Marine Scientist
Heal the Bay



Jose Pablo Ortiz Partida
Western State Climate Scientist
Union of Concerned Scientists



Janet Nudelman,
Director of Program and Policy
Breast Cancer Prevention Partners



Susan Jordan
Executive Director
California Coastal Protection Network



Rebecca Spector
West Coast Director
Center for Food Safety



Evan Minton
California Policy & Programmatic Manager
Voices for Progress



Dianna Cohen
Chief Executive Officer
Plastic Pollution Coalition



Betsy Reifsnider
Sacramento Policy Associate
Mono Lake Committee



Christopher Chin
Executive Director
The Center for Oceanic Awareness,
Research, and Education (COARE)



Leslie Mintz Tamminen
Director
Seventh Generation Advisors

Jennifer Savage
California Policy Manager
Surfrider Foundation

Amanda Brown-Stevens
Executive Director
Greenbelt Alliance

Chanell Fletcher
Executive Director
ClimatePlan

Anna Cummins
Co-Founder and Deputy Director
The 5 Gyres Institute

Medha Chandra, PhD
Organizer and Policy Advocate
Pesticide Action Network North America

Steven L. Evans
Wild Rivers Director
California Wilderness Coalition (CalWild)

David Krueger
President
Northern California Recycling Association

Julie Andersen
Global Executive Director
Plastic Oceans International

Linda Rudolph, MD
Senior Advisor
Center for Climate Change and Health

Chuck Mills
Director of Public Policy and Grants
California ReLeaf

Dr. Elizabeth Dougherty
Executive Director
Wholly H2O

David Lewis
Executive Director
Save The Bay

CC: President Pro Tem Toni Atkins, California State Senate
Speaker Anthony Rendon, California State Assembly
Secretary Jared Blumenfeld, California Environmental Protection Agency
Chair Joaquin Esquivel, State Water Resources Control Board
Deputy Cabinet Secretary Christine Hironaka, Governor's Office
Deputy Legislative Secretary Rachel Wagoner, Governor's Office
Executive Director Eileen Sobeck, State Water Resources Control Board
Kip Lipper, Office of the Senate President Pro Tem
Alf Brandt, Office of the Assembly Speaker
Marie Liu, Office of the Assembly Speaker