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June 29, 1998

Mr. Lester Snow,  
Executive Director of CALFED Bay-Delta Program  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Mr. Snow:

I am a native Californian and an environmentalist who has fished our state's rivers, lakes and streams for over sixty years. I have sadly witnessed the devastating and unnecessary destruction of our fisheries by attempts to manage and redirect the natural flows of water. Pollution of our waters from increased agricultural runoff, destruction of our spawning beds from siltation and modified river flows, (often the result of logging), the needless killing of hundreds of thousands of striped bass, salmon and other species that are sucked into the pumps and screens of the Central Valley water project, and the negative effects of countless other reckless acts that apparently have little regard for the welfare of our fish populations have all contributed to a massive decline in the once healthy status of our state's fish population. One has only to examine the "then and now" statistics of California's fishing history to realize the truth of what I have said.

But I write to you today specifically about the CALFED Bay-Delta Program proposal to raise the level of Shasta Dam. Although we cannot blame dams or water diversions for creating all of the problems mentioned above, they are certainly the biggest influence. Numerous studies are usually made prior to dam construction, to identify any potential problems or effects. But because of the complex, difficult and unpredictable fisheries problems caused by dams, studies cannot be heavily relied on---witness Grand Coulee and Bonneville dams, where the largest (outside of Alaska) salmon and steelhead runs are being destroyed, despite millions of dollars spent on "studies".

What will be the effect of raising the height of Shasta Dam? About the only thing we can say for certain is that we don't know what problems it will cause. However, I do have the following concerns:

1. I am concerned that there is no way to predict what effect increasing the capacity of Shasta Lake will have on the adjoining land, the Sacramento River or the Bay-Delta fisheries. Studies of potential results of dams and raising dams have failed to identify uncertainties and the disastrous results that have occurred.

2. I am concerned that increased water reliability will encourage increased demand for developing new farm areas, as well as an increase in the amount of poisons and agricultural pollution that is generated and released into our water ways. At present, as a result of poisons and chemicals (such as selenium) flowing into the rivers and Bay-Delta primarily from farming operations, the Fish and Game Department warns people not to eat certain fish within certain time periods.

3. I am concerned about the potential financial costs of this project; including the costs of raising the dam, relocating the existing marinas and highways; removing thousands of trees as well as compensating land owners, the marina owners and others. I also assume the marina owners pay rent, and this revenue would be lost during the construction period. The highway would have to be relocated and a new bridge built if the dam was increased by more than 17 feet.

4. I am concerned about the potential environmental and recreational costs of this project, the temporary losses during construction, the permanent losses when environments are destroyed. One can only wonder if these tremendous costs have been truly evaluated and held up against the potential benefits that are claimed. Will the project truly be worth the cost that the taxpayers will pay in dollars, the states' residents will pay in destroyed resources and recreation, and the state's future residents will have to live with forever?

5. And lastly, I am concerned that serious consideration is being given to such a potentially disastrous and devastating suggestion for increasing water supply and reliability without equally serious consideration and effort being given to the prospect of increasing water supply and reliability by *conscientiously seeking to reduce the state's water consumption and demand*. Time after time in today's world, communities are proving that they can get by with less water, that they can incorporate technology (retrofitted toilets, shower heads, washing machines etc.), financial incentives, (universal metering, rate structures that encourage conservation, etc.)and, recycling to save and thereby generate water supply, and yet much of the state continues to use water without any effort to conserve. Let's make sure we are doing all we can to use a precious resource wisely before we consider adopting programs that will destroy environments to increase water storing capacities.

Finally I would like to comment on the McCloud River. It contains one of purest strains of rainbow trout found anywhere in the world. The McCloud is recognized by leading fish experts as the finest trout river in California, and one of the outstanding rivers in the United States. The trout in this river were used to develop fisheries in the United States and many foreign countries, such as New Zealand.

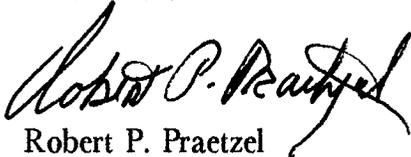
Over a hundred years ago, the Hills family recognized the McCloud and its surrounding area as something special and decided to preserve that part of the river they owned. Fifteen miles of this river was inundated by Shasta Dam. Even the lowest proposed dam increase of seventeen feet would destroy many more miles of the river, and several historical buildings, and would have a severe impact on wildlife in the area. It would allow boats in a remote, now tranquil canyon.

Is this how the Hill family is to be rewarded for having the foresight over a century ago to set aside this precious piece of land and river?

There are many options that should be explored before proceeding with this project..

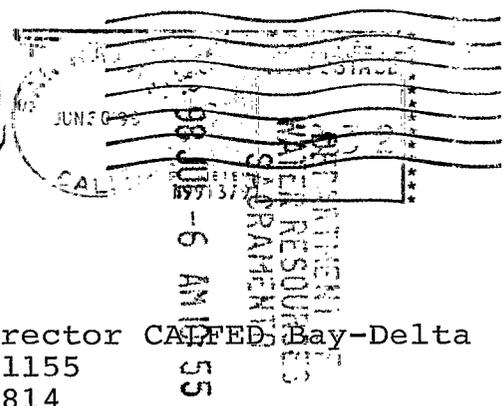
Thank you for considering my comments.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Robert P. Praetzel".

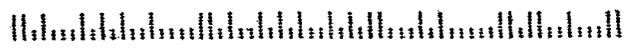
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