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June 22, 1998
Bruce H. Rector
P.O. Box 579
Glen Ellen, Ca 95442

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

Dear Lester Snow,

I am writing to you and all of the people you work with regarding the proposal to raise the height of Shasta Dam. I want to focus on the negative human impact from the proposed project. Please understand that the concern that I am covering will not fit neatly into an economic review, however it does relate to potential negative environmental impact and the human consequences. The subject of this letter deals with specific human and spiritual considerations of the potential action.

Because I have direct experience with part of the possibly impacted area, I want to focus my concern on the McCloud River. This unique and undescribly gorgeous river has several irreplaceable resources. Doing anything substantial and permanent (in our lifetime) to degrade these resources is unwise. We don't yet fully understand what is there, and when we do understand it, I truly believe it will greatly assist us in spanning the gap between our scientific/engineering worlds and our spiritual worlds.

Let us remember that fifteen miles of the McCloud has already been lost and irrevocably compromised. That is done, and it was done in an era when we had less capacity to understand all of the natural connections and downstream ramifications. Now we have no such excuse. Both from a scientific and spiritual point of view.

One of my central questions to you is this: How do you intend to mitigate the loss of the spiritual significance and spiritual situs by inundation of more of the McCloud River?

Let me apologize for bringing up such a subject that is kind of embarrassing. Just the fact that spirituality is not quantifiable makes it a subject to be avoided during these deliberations regarding "facts." I apologize if I make anyone feel uncomfortable in this discussion (I live by a simple credo: "It is better to love and embarrass myself than to have never loved at all"). So despite embarrassment, spirituality is a fact... the problem is it's not quantifiable. Nevertheless, this question deserves to be at the table with equal status.

There are several aspects to this question. One of the more quantifiable aspects are sites that are sacred to the Wintu and everyone connected literally and otherwise to their ancestors. I am sure that you will receive testimony to this point and I defer to people with more expertise in anthropology and ethnology.

The point that I do want to make about Native American considerations is that we are all aware of the unthinkable acts that were overtly and covertly perpetrated on these basically peaceful people. I am not going to curse my cultural ancestors that took part in these crimes that were done consciously and unconsciously. What I am going to do is to implore you, particularly with the influence that you hold, to realize that we *now* have the awareness and consciousness of what we are doing.

Even a small violation of the spiritual grounds of our Native Americans is to be avoided at almost all costs. To contribute to such a violation now is an actual and a symbolic condoning of all of the violations of the past. Now is the time to reverse this trend of passive condoning, now is the time to initiate understanding of our Natives' wisdom, and now is the time to encourage any healing that is possible.

Let me turn to a different, even less quantifiable subject which is within the scope of your responsibility. I ask these questions: What is the spiritual value of a wild fishery? And how do you plan to mitigate the ecological upset to that fishery that would be caused by further inundation of the McCloud?

I don't even know where to start with this question, but I do firmly know that it is just as real as wanting there to be water when I turn on the tap. These questions must be at the table with equal status.

The fact that the question, "What is the spiritual value of a wild fishery?" is so imponderable is a tip-off that maybe we shouldn't be messing with the possibility of irrevocably disturbing such a fishery. I bring this consideration to the table and once again implore you to consider it, despite its unquantifiable aspects.

I thank you for your patience in letting me turn to one last subject. The question is: How do you plan to mitigate the loss of an old (built in 1860) sanctuary on part of the McCloud that could be possibly flooded? I am referring to the log cabin dining room of the Bollibokka Club.

Let me explain so there is no chance of trivializing this issue. I have been fortunate enough through hard work and luck to become a member of Bollibokka. In turn I have invited many people there from all walks of life. I have never accepted any money, despite many offers, from any of these guests (and I fully appreciate that I am a guest of the Hills family and the River). Instead of money, what I have accepted is a spiritual intimacy from these vastly different people that have broken bread in that dining room.

The people that have come there have an incredible diversity of belief and disbelief in spiritual matters. But they all have one belief... something happens that is extraordinary when you have a meal in that 138 year old dining room that feels exactly like a sanctuary.

I realize that one danger of bringing up this issue is the ease of stereotyping what happens in that log cabin is the pass-time of the elite. I can assure you that none of these people can count themselves into that social strata. These are regular folks, myself included, that have just gotten lucky enough to be there. And how about the unlucky ones that aren't there? Because everyone hasn't had such an experience does it mean that it should be invalidated, inundated, and destroyed?

Rather look at where we are in our human spiritual development. There is a lot of resistance by a large percentage of the population in going to "church" and receiving the developmental benefits of considering what is said and felt there. This 138 year old dining room is an irreplaceable, unmovable church that people do not resist going to. There are years and years of thought and feeling that have gone into those walls and it feels like that wisdom exudes back out of those walls the second you step over that threshold.

I realize that this is the most self-centered of the points that I have brought up and as I have said, it is an easy target of negative stereotypes. But consider it this way if you would - That sanctuary is like a still pond into which someone has thrown a stone. We can never be certain how the waves will touch things as they emanate from that sanctuary. By experience I know the waves are positive in their nature. By experience I know that I would not like my legacy to be part of the process that lead to the demise of such a rare and irreplaceable place.

I thank you for your patience to read to the end of this letter. And I apologize if any of these topics brought discomfort because of their inability to be quantified, because of their imponderability, and because not everyone can get their arms around these kinds of facts. They are nevertheless facts. The summary question is: What are we going to do about them?

It is with great respect that I submit these questions to you. You have a very difficult job. Until we get to meet, I send my -

Sincere and warm regards,



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