SAVE CALIFORNIA SALMON

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State Water Board Votes to Adopt Bay-Delta Plan, Ignoring the Requests of Tribes

After 2 days of hearings, the State Water Board approved the Bay Delta Plan, including Voluntary Agreements opposed by Tribes, fishing families, and conservation groups.

Sacramento, CA - Yesterday, the State Water Resources Control Board (Board) voted 4 to 1 to adopt the update to the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan (Plan). This is the first major update to the Plan in decades. The Plan lets the largest water rights holders meet environmental requirements through the so-called "Healthy Rivers and Landscapes" Voluntary Agreements (VAs) instead of the enforceable flow standards supported by Tribes, environmental justice communities, fishing communities, and conservation groups.

The vote came late last night after two days of comments to the State Water Board from 16 groups of commenters and over 100 individual commenters. Speakers included state agencies, local agencies, Tribes, fishing communities, and conservation groups. Many traveled long distances to Sacramento to give their public comments in person and many more joined remotely. Public comments closed around 6:45 PM and the Board continued late into the night, ultimately creating a third change sheet for the Plan before voting at 11:00 PM.

Tribal members, fishing families, environmental advocates, and youth, including youth from the Karuk, Hoopa Valley, and Yurok Tribes, urged the Board to reject the VAs as part of the Plan. Tribes were not party to writing the Voluntary Agreements and spent years raising concerns before the Board. Tribes on the Trinity and Klamath Rivers also warn that the Plan threatens their rivers' recovery, two years after the removal of the Klamath dams.

The Plan designates “Tribal Tradition and Culture” as a beneficial use in the Bay Delta, which marks the first designation of the Board’s 2017 Tribal Beneficial definitions. Additionally, the Plan includes the creation of a Bay Delta Tribal Advisory Group.

> “The adoption of the Bay Delta Plan was unfortunately predictable. We are disappointed that after years of comments from Tribes opposing the VAs, the Board still moved forward with the inclusion of VAs in the Plan. We are glad that CUL beneficial uses will be designated but with our diminishing trust in the Board to follow through with commitments to better partnerships with Tribes, we are worried CUL beneficial uses will not be adequately protected. Despite this decision, we will continue to push for adequate flows for salmon.”
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> – Kasil Willie, Policy Director, Save California Salmon, responding to the adoption of the Bay Delta Plan

Yesterday's vote shows that the State Water Board will continue to make decisions about Tribal waters without listening to Tribes. California cannot secure its water future while leaving out the original stewards of its rivers.

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Related resources:

- State Water Resources Control Board Press Release - Oct. 30, 2026
- Office of Gov. Newsom - Oct. 30, 2026
- Maven’s Notebook – Courthouse News, Oct. 29
- CalMatters Article - Oct. 29, 2026
- LA Time Article - Oct. 30, 2026
- SWRCB Bay-Delta Watershed Homepage
- SWRCB Sacramento/Delta Plan Update Page