

Dear Governor Brown, Senate President pro tem Steinberg, and Assembly Speaker Pérez:

We, the undersigned, request your action on a matter of urgent concern.

Mercury-contaminated sediment from legacy mines in the Sierra Nevada and the Inner Coast Range continues to be transported downstream to the San Francisco Bay and Delta (Delta), contributing nearly all of the mercury that currently enters the Delta.<sup>1</sup> **This contamination poses a significant threat to the public health of the people and to the ecosystems that depend on these watersheds.**

Moreover, mercury-contaminated sediment collects in reservoirs throughout the Sierra. Sediment behind California's dams has diminished the overall storage capacity of 200 reservoirs by 50 percent.<sup>2</sup> Traditional dredging and reservoir-maintenance techniques are poorly suited for dealing with mercury-contaminated sediments, and we need to invest in projects developing new methods that can get the mercury out while **reclaiming water storage in existing reservoirs** thereby increasing the security of the water supply for California.

**We are seeking inclusion of clarifying language in the upcoming water bond that emphasizes the importance of legacy mine remediation in the Sierra Nevada and Inner Coast Range watersheds for maintaining the sustainability and health of the Delta. Language directing funding to assess, design, and implement pilot projects that limit the transport of mercury into the Delta from upstream reservoirs and legacy gold and mercury mines could be included for Delta Sustainability without increasing the bond amount.** Such pilot projects to find methods that remediate legacy gold and mercury mines are already underway and have yielded promising results, but they have progressed as far as they can without more public support to solve this historic environmental health and justice issue.

Addressing the upland legacy mines and the reservoirs collecting contaminated sediment makes an intractable issue affecting hundreds of California's waterways into one simple mission: **find the sources and clean them up.**

Funding to address legacy mines need not increase the cost of the water bond; rather, existing funding intended to protect the Delta would be best spent if some funds were allocated to mitigate the continuing and devastating impact of legacy mine pollution. Should the water bond fail to consider explicitly the problem of legacy mercury in the Sierra and Coast Ranges, then the bond will provide only temporary solutions to the festering calamity of downstream mercury contamination – a legacy we will leave for our children to clean up.

To ensure healthy and secure water resources for all Californians, we, the undersigned, urge you to support explicit resources to **get the mercury out** of these crucial watersheds.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wood, M.L., Foe, C.G., Cooke, J., Louie, S.J. (2010), Sacramento – San Joaquin Delta Estuary TMDL for Methylmercury Staff Report, Staff Report, April 2010, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Minear, J. T., and G. M. Kondolf (2009), Estimating reservoir sedimentation rates at large spatial and temporal scales: A case study of California, Water Resour. Res., 45, W12502, doi:10.1029/2007WR006703.

Sincerely,

**Elizabeth Martin, The Sierra Fund**

**Bob Schneider, Tuleyome**

Bill Allayaud, Environmental Working Group (EWG)

John Brady, Mariposans for Environmentally Responsible Government

Joan Clayburgh, Sierra Nevada Alliance

Rebecca Crebbin, Coates - Planning and Conservation League (PCL)

Caleb Dardick, South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL)

Dana Davis, Teichert

Stevee Duber , High Sierra Rural Alliance

Dave Eggerton , Eldorado Irrigation District

Bill Newsom

Donald Rivenes, Forest Issues Group

Remleh Scherzinger , Nevada Irrigation District