



Legislation Text

File #: 18-417, **Version:** 1

Report Prepared by: Mike Conway, Assistant to the City Manager

SUBJECT: Resolution Opposing the State Water Resources Control Board Substitute Environmental Document

REPORT IN BRIEF

Request council approve resolution opposing the State Water Resources Control Board Substitute Environmental Document.

RECOMMENDATION

City Council - Adopt a motion approving **Resolution 2018-57**, a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Merced, California, opposing the State Water Resources Control Board Substitute Environmental Document regarding potential changes to the water quality control plan for the San Francisco Bay - Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta Estuary.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve, as recommended by staff; or,
2. Approve, subject to other than recommended by staff (identify specific findings and/or conditions amended to be addressed in the motion); or,
3. Deny; or,
4. Refer to staff for consideration of specific items (specific items to be addressed in the motion); or,
5. Continue to a future meeting (date and time to be specified in the motion).

AUTHORITY

Charter City of Merced, Sec. 200.

CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES

As provided for in the 2018-19 Council Priorities.

DISCUSSION

The State Water Resources Control Board spent nine years before issuing its Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan for the Lower San Joaquin River and Southern Delta and the accompanying Substitute Environmental Document in July.

The SWRCB ignored non-flow alternatives that are less costly and wasn't open to working with Valley interests before releasing the plan. As written the document will cause extreme hardship for Merced County and the City of Merced. More than 800 family farms in the region would be lost because of the plan and 128,295 acres of prime agricultural land would lay idle because of it.

The impact on farming would have an immense influence on the City of Merced. It would cost 1,190 people their jobs in agriculture, and that would ripple through the City's economy, costing another 2,284 jobs. The economic shock from the 3,484 jobs lost because of the Substitute Environmental Document would be substantial. It is estimated that the loss of those jobs would result in \$29.4 million eliminated from our local economy.

While this document represents long term planning by the SWRCB, it also affects the City's long term plans. The City is working on a groundwater sustainability plan under orders from the State Department of Water Resources. The City is supposed to reduce its dependence on groundwater and start using renewable resources, with the Merced River being the best and most reliable source readily available to us. However, the SWRCB is eliminating the City's potential source of renewable water under this plan.

The state is also using its transportation policy to have Merced help alleviate a severe housing shortage in the San Francisco Bay Area by extending the Altamont Commuter Express tracks to Merced and the High Speed Rail line from San Jose to Merced, without any regard for a renewable water supply for new or existing residents. The SWRQB plan puts a renewable water supply further out of reach.

In addition to the City Council taking a position against the Substitute Environmental Document, the City has joined in the efforts of San Joaquin County, Stanislaus County, Merced County and other valley cities in educating the community on the negative impact of the pending SWRQB decision.

IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES

No appropriation of funds is needed.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution 2018-57