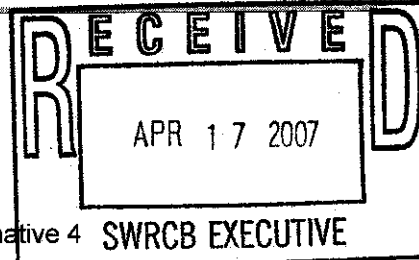


Wetland/Riparian Policy
Deadline: 4/19/07 12 noon



From: "Nancy A. Piotrowski, Ph.D." <nap@snoozebutton.org>
To: <commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov>
Date: Tue, Apr 17, 2007 10:19 AM
Subject: Wetlands and Riparin Protection Policy - Writing in Support of Alternative 4

Dear Public Official.

I am aware that a meeting is taking place in the next day or two about Wetlands and Riparin Protections. I just became aware of this meeting and the ability to make public comments.

I am writing to ask you to support State Water Resources Control Board's proposed Alternative 4. Though other alternatives may hold promise, 4 is the only one that seems able to do the job adequately in a comprehensive and longer-term fashion.

I write to you today to ask for this because I remember when I used to believe that environmental impact statements were fair and could actually save and protect vital land. Sadly, I don't believe these kinds of mechanisms are working anymore. Stories from friends of mine in places like the Army Corps of Engineers let me know that the fights over wording in reports and how it might affect economic interests are still huge and environmental protection is not something we can take for granted. I can only wonder what is going to happen longer term to our lands (and lives) if we fail to choose wisely in long-term planning and put serious teeth into legislation, policy, and their enforcement of the protections we elect to support. And when it comes to water - the stakes are simply the highest ever.

Anyway, I am writing because I have worked in estuarian biology over the years and observed dramatic changes to the wetlands in the mid-Atlantic region, the Gulf coast, and our grand state of California. I am writing because I am concerned about how our wetlands have been managed - or more sadly, let go - over the years. We are losing dramatic, beautiful, and important ecosystems to ignorance, pollution, and short-term development interests. And it seems, to me, that development interests have really gotten out of hand in that they are truly getting in the way of any long-term care to wetland ecosystems and water protections.

I write to you now more specifically about California wetlands. The last 30 years and more have taken a horrible toll on wetlands in the US in general. And in California, these vulnerable areas, some of our state's most valuable resources, are in dire need of care, attention, and protection. As such, for what wetland is remaining, protecting it now is in the best interest of California's environment and economy.

Rampant development and related pollution and erosion in vital watershed areas has already created difficulties for migrating birds and the wildlife in their related ecosystems. We need to stop this now to protect the birds, the other wetland creatures, the environment itself, and the water interests therein.

The State of California needs a comprehensive approach to protecting its remaining wetlands and streams and the wildlife that depends on them. State Water Resources Control Board's proposed Alternative 4 seems to be the only plan that will adequately do the job. Alternative 4 appears equipped to fully protect our wetlands and streams by addressing the causes of pollution and erosion and offering the strongest safeguards for our wetlands, waters, and wildlife.

Sadly, the federal government is not consistently enforcing environmental or wildlife-related laws or making significant efforts to protect our waters. The U.S. Supreme Court also has handed down several recent decisions that have removed crucial protections from many of our wetlands and waters. And so this means the action has to be local. Plain and simple, California officials need to do what they usually do best -- lead and set the example for the rest of the nation. Our state needs to step up its protection policies for some of our most valuable and vulnerable areas - and make good use of such opportunities to do so as they arise.

The opportunity ahead now is adoption of the Wetland and Riparian Protection Policy Alternative 4 by the end of 2007. With this California can provide the strongest possible protections for our irreplaceable

wetlands and streams, and the wildlife and people who depend on them.

Again, I think a lot is at stake with this for the longer term. I thank you for working on these problems and considering my concerns and suggestions.

Thank you.

-Nancy A. Piotrowski, Ph.D.
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