

Additional Talking Points

- Low river flows impede fish migration, concentrate pollutants, raise water temperatures, and eliminate migratory cues for fish returning to spawn. Flows should be sufficient to inundate floodplains, which serve as critical habitat for juvenile salmon and other fish.
- Historically, populations of spawning salmon may have exceeded 400,000 fish in the San Joaquin River Basin, but in many recent years that figure has plummeted to just a few thousand.
- Salmon are a keystone species, providing food for other animals and transporting nutrients from the ocean to upland habitats. More than 100 species depend on salmon.
- The commercial salmon fishery in California is on the brink. The salmon population was so low in 2008 and 2009 that the commercial fishing season had to be cancelled, resulting in the loss of more than 2,200 jobs and \$255 million in annual revenue.
- The Bay-Delta forms the West Coast's largest estuary, providing habitat for more than 500 species of wildlife. It serves as a major stopover on the Pacific Flyway, and as a migration pathway for salmon, steelhead and sturgeon traveling to and from their home streams to the Pacific Ocean.
- On average, less than 50% of the freshwater flow from the Central Valley reaches the Bay, and in some years, less than 35%. Reduced inflows shifts the size and location of the ecologically-important *salinity mixing zone*, affecting everything from plankton to marine mammals. Between 1975 and 2014, the **natural** unimpaired runoff in the watershed was only low enough to create a "supercritically dry" year once, but upstream diversions captured so much runoff during those four decades that the Bay experienced "supercritically dry" conditions in 19 years instead of just one.
- Reduced freshwater inflow has changed the chemistry of the Delta, enabling cyanobacteria to thrive. These blue-green algae produce neurotoxins that can make people sick and kill plankton and wildlife.
- Through better management of snowmelt, water efficient irrigation practices, and replacing lower-value, water-intensive crops with higher-value, water-efficient crops, we could grow more food with less water.
- In the South San Joaquin Water District, a pressurized irrigation system reduced water use by 30% while increasing crop yields by 30%.
- In the Hetch Hetchy service area, water use decreased by 30% between 2006 and 2016 as a result of water conservation. We can accomplish great things when we all work together.

- In California, water is a public trust resource, meaning it belongs to the people of California. Water agencies have water rights, but the State can determine which beneficial uses have priority. It could be argued that food grown for Californians is a beneficial use of our water, but it's **harder** to make that case for exports. Agricultural exports benefit a few farmers – often corporations – at the expense of other beneficial uses.