



September 15, 2026

Via E-Mail

The Honorable Rob Bonta
Attorney General of California
California Department of Justice
1300 I Street
Sacramento, California 95814-2919

Re: Protecting California's Water Resources, Communities, and Fish and Wildlife from
New Federal Threats

Attorney General Bonta:

During the Trump administration, you have taken aggressive steps to push back against unlawful federal government action to "[defend California's people, values, and resources](#)." Most recently, you worked with 20 other states to sue the administration over its [unlawful weakening of the Endangered Species Act](#). The over 80 lawsuits filed during this Trump term are in addition to [over 120 lawsuits](#) filed by your predecessors, including Secretary Xavier Becerra, during the prior Trump administration. From safeguarding constitutional rights to supporting free and fair elections to defending California's climate programs, natural resources, and environment, these lawsuits have provided material and vital benefits and protections to California and its residents. We greatly

appreciate your leadership and efforts to shield California from federal overreach, misconduct, and lawlessness.

Despite California’s record of court victories against unlawful federal actions, Trump administration efforts to undermine California’s sovereignty and legal protections for people and the environment continue. Federal law requires the United States Bureau of Reclamation (“Bureau”) to comply with state laws regarding the control, use, appropriation, and distribution of water. The State Water Resources Control Board, in turn, oversees the State’s water right permits and licenses. These dictate how much water the Bureau can divert and store in its reservoirs.

Yet, the Bureau, with the backing and support of various politically-connected water contractors, recently [resoundingly objected](#) to any effort by the State to regulate the Central Valley Project (“CVP”). In response to the release of a final draft of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan, the Bureau wrote that “State law cannot impose gatekeeping approval” on the Bureau’s operation of the CVP. The Bureau also threatened to “maximize” water deliveries, “accelerate infrastructure that . . . expands conveyance capacity of federal, state, and local conveyance facilities,”¹ “cease any further participation or funding” of Voluntary Agreements,² and otherwise operate the CVP pursuant to the Trump administration’s executive orders, regardless of the consequences to Tribes, communities, and fish and wildlife, or the requirements of California and federal law.

The Bureau’s behavior is not new. The Trump administration’s unlawful actions under the California and Federal Endangered Species Acts in 2019 prompted [California to sue](#), specifically reminding the Bureau that it is required to comply with California law, including the California Endangered Species Act. And yet this [July, the Bureau insisted](#) that California has no right to steward the State’s resources in a manner that imposes regulations on the Bureau’s operation of the CVP. In this communication, the Bureau told the State Water Resources Control Board that it cannot question determinations made by the Bureau regarding the impacts of Shasta Dam and Reservoir operations on endangered fish.³

¹ This presumably refers to the Bureau and Westlands Water District’s long-standing attempts to raise Shasta Dam—a plan that is blatantly unlawful, that would cause irreparable harm to Tribes, communities, and endangered fish and wildlife, and that has already been [successfully](#) challenged by conservation groups and [California under Attorney General Becerra](#).

² The Voluntary Agreements (referred to in the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan as the “Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Commitments”), were negotiated between Governor Newsom, the federal government, and water and irrigation districts in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys. Tribes and conservation and fishing organizations were excluded from the process.

³ The Bureau has failed to provide protective Sacramento River water temperatures (53.5°F at the Clear Creek gage) [on 42 of the last 49 days](#), and will not do so for the remainder of the water year. The Bureau has also failed to meet the temperature threshold it [told the Water Board it would meet \(56°F at Balls Ferry\)](#) every day since September 6. These conditions cause substantial harm and mortality to Chinook Salmon eggs, and put the endangered runs and the commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries at significant risk.

The Bureau's ongoing insistence that it can flout California and federal law, ignore California regulators, and cause ongoing harm to Californians and the State's environment demands a strong response to protect California's authority, independence, natural resources and communities that depend on those resources.

We urge you to speak out against these latest attacks, and we request a meeting with you and your staff to discuss how we can support your efforts to protect California from this and other federal harm and overreach impacting the Bay-Delta and its watershed.

We appreciate your ongoing work and look forward to speaking with you soon.

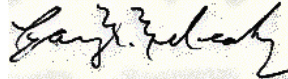
Sincerely,



Eric Buescher
**San Francisco
Baykeeper**



Vice Chair Malissa Tayaba
**Shingle Springs Band of
Miwok Indians**



Gary Mulcachy
**Winnemem Wintu
Tribe**



Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla
Restore the Delta



Gary Bobker
Friends of the River



Peter Drekmeier
Yosemite Rivers Alliance



Michael Frost
Golden State Salmon Association



Scott Webb
**Resource Renewal
Institute**


9/16/26

Brook Thompson
Save California Salmon



Chris Shutes
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

cc: Gov. Gavin Newsom
State Water Resources Control Board Chair Joaquin Esquivel