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**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL'S REPORT ON
BIOLOGICAL OPINIONS FOR DELTA SMELT & SALMON**

Sacramento, CA - "In general, this report is a thoughtful description of the questions underlying Delta science and sets the stage for much-needed additional refinement in how the state's water projects and endangered fish species are managed day-to-day in the Delta. We have not questioned whether the agencies' overall science is justified, but rather with the specific restrictions, or triggers for cutbacks, many of which were questioned in the report. Right now, the state's primary water projects are under heavy regulation – causing the loss of thousands of acre-feet of water per day. Since January, we've lost more than 475,000 acre-feet of water – enough to serve 3.8 million people for one year – due to water pumping restrictions.

"The National Research Council expressed a lack of confidence in the benefits of specific restrictions and the way fish populations are monitored in the Delta. Essentially, massive water losses are being mandated 'without confident assessment of the benefits...' to the fish (see page 39). If a handful of Delta smelt can cause the loss of hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water, we need to be sure of our science. We need to know that fish species are truly benefiting from the loss of water supplies, and we simply don't know that now.

"There is considerable flexibility within the existing restrictions that should be exercised, starting next month. The National Research Council found a lack of statistical data to justify the severe water pumping restrictions that are mandated on behalf of Delta smelt in the fall months of wet years. This single restriction can cost water agencies a supply that is sufficient to sustain all the homes in Los Angeles for more than two years or all San Diego homes for eight years. In the meantime, we look forward to the final report that will address the role of other stressors in the system. As the Council has stated, the role of other stressors in the decline of the estuary could be potentially large.

“Many unanswered questions remain. This report shows that we need additional, focused, scientific study now. And we must continue working on the more comprehensive solution that will be provided by the Bay Delta Conservation Plan.”

Laura King Moon
Assistant General Manager
State Water Contractors

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The State Water Contractors is a statewide, non-profit association of 27 public agencies from Northern, Central and Southern California that purchase water under contract from the California State Water Project. Collectively the State Water Contractors deliver water to more than 25 million residents throughout the state and more than 750,000 acres of agricultural lands. For more information on the State Water Contractors, please visit www.swc.org.