

The Ventura Audubon Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 24198, Ventura, CA 93002 www.venturaaudubon.org

February 14, 2011

Karen Waln
City of Ventura
Environmental and Water Resources Division

Dear Ms. Waln,

The following are Ventura Audubon's comments on the draft synthesis report on the Santa Clara River Estuary study.

Section 4.2.2.3 - We believe the evaporation rates derived are high. The difficulty arises from using the United Water temperature data from El Rio-Saticoy. That area in the spring and summer months is often 15 degrees Fahrenheit higher than the condition at the SCRE. The El Rio-Saticoy area is also free of coastal fog most of the spring and summer. This increase in temperature and solar radiation would skew the calculated evaporation rate upwards.

Section 11.5 - Mentions that Least Terns are not affected by small water quality changes. Such changes can bring about increased algal blooms. The resulting algal mats can significantly reduce the clear water surface area available for Least Terns to forage in.

Throughout the document there are references to high water levels in the estuary reducing non-contact recreational opportunities. In fact most of the mentioned recreational activities are still available but with one less access point. People can still park at the north end of the estuary and walk down the beach to enjoy hiking, surfing, birdwatching, nature observation, swimming and sunbathing. The activity that is limited by high water is sleeping by the estuary as the campground is closed. This also represents an economic loss to State Parks.

An assumption is made that the Wildlife Ponds will be maintained if Alternative 6 is chosen and there is no discharge to the estuary. Since the Regional Boards compliance point is before the Wildlife Ponds we do not believe that this assumption is valid. Loss of the ponds would be a loss of 1 MGD sub-surface flow to the estuary and would significantly reduce the size of the estuary. A section should be added giving the impacts of this possibility.

One useful addition would be maps showing the extent of the estuary under the various discharge alternatives. It is difficult to visualize this from just data on the height of the surface water or volume of water entering the estuary.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. Please contact me if you have questions. We look forward to receiving in writing your reactions to them.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Reed V. Smith", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Reed V. Smith, Science Chair