

HAMMONDS RANCH
47375 W. Dakota Avenue
Firebaugh, California 93622



May 18, 2012

Ms. Janice Pinero
Endangered Species Act Specialist
Bureau of Reclamation, Bay Delta Office
8011 I Street, Suite 140
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Comments for Public Scoping on EIS for Remanded BOs on the Coordinated
Long-Term Operation of the CVP and SWP**

Dear Ms. Pinero, U. S. Bureau of Reclamation

Hammonds Ranch is a third generation family farm. Farming for more than 90 years, land which is now served by the Panoche Water District and the Firebaugh Canal Water District.

For the past 20 years we have seen our farm decrease in size by more than 50% and in turn, labor, equipment and materials, all of which are having a negative effect on our area. This is primarily due to the reduced water supply from regulation of the Delta and the way CVPIA has been implemented.

What really hurts is now we are primarily drip irrigated (90%+) on the land we are farming and fallowing 10% or more, depending on the annual water allocation and having a heck of a time making these investments pay. These investments in irrigation efficiency are paid through loan commitments and due to the way the delta is being regulated we have such wide variations in the water allocation plus not knowing what the allocation may be until late in year, we are not able live up to the commitments banks require. In addition, planning, contracting and planting of annual crops is impossible if you don't know if and when you have water.

As chairman of the San Luis Delta Mendota Water Authority and a director for Panoche Water District and Firebaugh Canal Water District, I am convinced that beginning with this Remanded Biological Opinion process, the Bureau has a real opportunity to provide the necessary leadership to assure that the BO is based on sound facts and science and that at the same time all stressors on the delta will be addressed with equal effort. Without that leadership we will be bogged in law suits and our efforts to improve the economy, including water transfers which result from the irrigation efficiency investments, will be killed, to the detriment of agriculture, M & I AND the environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Stearns". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Stearns,
General Manager