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Letters to the Editor March 4 - 10

Non-madeup facts

In his letter to the editor, Bob Horvath ("Really Tired," Feb. 25) says he gets, "... so tired of environmental advocates who make up facts and state irresponsible conclusions." He then states a number of highly debatable "facts," without citations.

I am an environmental advocate. Here are some facts. As you will see, I didn't make them up.

The nonpartisan Pacific Institute released a study ("Desalination with a Grain of Salt," online at www.pacinst.org/reports/desalination/) outlining desalination benefits and dangers. It says brine discharge: "... presents a significant environmental challenge ... Typical brines contain twice as much salt as the feedwater and have a higher density...can contain concentrations of [naturally occurring] manganese, lead, and iodine... and impinged and entrained marine organisms killed during the desalination process... Chemicals used throughout the desalination process may also be discharged with the brine." These include, "Chlorine and other biocides...Anti-scalants, such as polyacrylic or sulfuric acid...Coagulants, such as ferric chloride and polymers...Industrial soaps...(and)...copper, lead, and iron"

It concludes that: "The chemical constituents and physical behavior of brine discharge pose a threat to marine organisms. Brine can kill organisms on short timescales and may also cause more subtle changes in the community assemblage over longer time periods. Heat, trace metals, brine and other toxicants may result in acute mortality to organisms in the receiving waterbody."

It adds: "Along California's coast, rocky habitat and kelp beds are particularly rich, sensitive ecosystems, and effort should be made to avoid these areas."

There you go, Mr. Horvath. I hope you didn't find that too tiring.

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