

May 21, 2001

Dear California State Legislator,

You have likely heard a lot about vernal pools and fairy shrimp, much of it probably related to conflicts between conservation of the pools and development. While the current focal point of vernal pool conservation happens to be the proposed UC Merced campus siting, the issue is much larger than the UC project alone. Vernal pools were once common in California's Central Valley. Now less than 10% remain. Urban sprawl and agricultural conversion continues to threaten what little remains of this uniquely Californian habitat. Vernal pools and their associated grasslands are an ecosystem in peril.

The California Native Plant Society has been interested in vernal pools and their conservation for over 25 years. In February we provided your office with a volume of scientific papers about vernal pool ecosystems and two special editions of our quarterly journal, *Fremontia*. Today we would like to share with you numerous items from the popular press – some specifically about the UC Merced siting controversy and others about vernal pools in general. Additionally, we have included a CD-ROM prepared by Sacramento Splash, a non-profit education group, with a 5th grade curriculum based on using the Mather Field vernal pools in as an outdoor classroom. Currently, the Splash curriculum is being offered in over 30 classrooms in Sacramento County and is considered a resounding success in elementary school science education.

We invite you and your staff to review the enclosed materials in order to become more fully informed on the issues surrounding vernal pool conservation. Additionally, members of the California Native Plant Society would be more than happy to meet with you or your staff to discuss this important issue. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Allen Barnes
Executive Director