

As a group we must not adopt an attitude that the bays and estuaries will always take care of themselves. With that attitude, we feel obliged to take water away for other uses and we will see if the bays will adapt in time from the effects. While the bays adapt to less freshwater inflow they will certainly not produce the volume of seafood they used to. This already has been going downhill for some time. My industry has gradually been seeing this over the last 20 years or so. We as a committee may not have to stamp our approval on the scientific findings of our BBEST team, but you have to respect the many studies of the past and lots of time and money spent, as well as the findings of our BBEST team that they were not just made up numbers but serious recommendations of what the systems need. We have no problem believing in our team when we talk about Lavaca Bay and river, but for some reason the recommendation on the Colorado River and Matagorda system are not right. If the bays and estuaries get the recommended water flows then you don't worry about change. If they don't, then you don't know what you've done in the future until more damage is noticeable and it gets your attention. Why do we wait, what more do we need to know? East Matagorda Bay is a prime example of what happens to bay systems when the freshwater inflow is limited. Yes, fish will live, but many other species have been limited or do not exist there anymore. Yes, you can call it ecologically sounds – if what you want the bays to evolve to is to catch big fish and that's it. But eventually they will suffer. Who has the right to make that decision – nobody. Your scientist, your state agencies, and your BBASK committee – nobody has that right. Taking water away from the bays and estuaries is not the answer for current water rights or future water rights or permits. We must find other answers. New reservoirs, deeper reservoirs, bigger reservoirs, stop taking on new customers, conservation methods, whatever. I live down here in Matagorda County, where most of us are fighting to keep a coal plant from being built. Our local river authority says there is water available. It says by law it has to provide the water if it's available. If there is water available, then why do we sit up here and want to take more water from the bays and estuaries? You want balance, the bays and estuaries have already taken their losses, and they have been taking it for years while more and more water rights are approved. The commercial fisheries already know this, Texas Parks and Wildlife knows this, and the

recreational industry will eventually know this. I believe we all know this, but I don't think some of us are ready to do something about it. TCEQ commissioners have shown us by the Galveston Bay System that they don't know this and now we are about to tell them they are right. When turtle excluders were forced on shrimpers in the 80's by environmentalist wanting to save the turtles, we shrimpers didn't want them or like them. Now in the 2000's we know they were right. Now the fishermen and the environmentalist are telling you you're hurting the bays and estuaries and like us shrimpers back then – you don't like it or think it's necessary that the systems need this much water. Well you're wrong, and if you don't stop taking water and start giving more back to these systems, you're going to destroy more than just the commercial fishing industry – you're going to destroy the habitat to a lot of sea life and marshland animals. We are being forced to bargain water rights for the bays and estuaries for fear TCEQ is going to take the water away anyways. A statement needs to be made to TCEQ from this committee that we think they're wrong to short change any bay systems. If TCEQ decides to do the same to our bays and estuaries then maybe TCEQ needs to be dismantled and rebuilt so that they have a better understanding of what's going on down on our coastal lines. As I said if there is water available, listen to the science team and make sure those recommendations are met. Or better than that; listen to your conscience. Like a four way intersection that needs stop lights or stop signs don't wait and put them up after multiple wrecks and deaths finally get your attention. I personally, with my industry behind me, will not bargain for water that we have been losing anyways.