

JIM COSTA

16TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA
WEB PAGE: www.costa.house.gov



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
LIVESTOCK AND FOREIGN AGRICULTURE
RANKING MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
GENERAL FARM COMMODITIES AND RISK MANAGEMENT

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
WATER, POWER AND OCEANS

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

April 10, 2015

Tom Howard
Executive Director
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95814
RE: Balancing 2015 CVP Water Supply Obligations

Dear Mr. Howard,

As you know, we in the Valley represent 4 million of the State's 38 million people. The people of the San Joaquin Valley rely upon the import of federal Central Valley Project (CVP) water to serve their daily economic and agricultural needs. Many of the communities in the San Joaquin Valley are disadvantaged, rural towns that proudly produce much of the nation's food supply. The water crisis has caused intense suffering and has had an intolerable impact on those communities. Unfortunately, with the continued absence of rainfall, we continue to be faced with increasingly difficult decisions that must be made in order to best balance our inadequate water supply.

The State Water Resources Control Board (Board) requested of the United States Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) temperature modeling runs to assess the potential use of stored CVP water supply under a variety of operational assumptions, which Reclamation has provided. The current focus on water management actions, especially given the current hydrology; presents us with limited opportunities to protect or improve the status of fish species of concern. A more comprehensive approach is needed that addresses all of the stressors on the ecosystem. I urge the Board to take a more active role in the recommended actions for other agencies listed in the program of implementation for the 2006 Bay-Delta Plan. This is specifically important because data from prior years suggest that the average rate of survival for out-migrating salmon is very low, even in better water years (e.g., 2013 acoustic tag data show 84% mortality before the fish even reach the Delta).

With respect to the modelling scenarios under consideration, two of the Board requested scenarios (6b (2) & (3)) demonstrate significant periods of time where no CVP water is diverted at the Jones Pumping Plant to serve needs south of the Delta, which gravely impairs water transfer potential, while at the same time resulting in the CVP incurring greater debt to the State Water Project under the Coordinated Operations Agreement (COA). These operational scenarios would cause unreasonable, and avoidable, human and environmental harms. Additionally, Scenario 6b (1) results in early reliance upon the side gates at Shasta, which proved problematic

FRESNO OFFICE:
855 M STREET, SUITE 940
FRESNO, CA 93721
PHONE: (559) 495-1620
FAX: (559) 495-1027

MERCED OFFICE:
2222 M STREET, SUITE 305
MERCED, CA 95340
PHONE: (209) 384-1620
FAX: (209) 384-1629

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1314 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
PHONE: (202) 225-3341
FAX: (202) 225-9308

in 2014, resulting in temperatures higher than desired for reproduction of protected winter-run Chinook salmon.

Reclamation has proposed Scenario 6b (4) to address the dangerous and avoidable effects identified in the other model simulations. By increasing temperature compliance by one degree, this scenario extends the availability of cold water later into the season, delaying reliance upon the side gates while minimizing the water diversion and COA debt impacts. Biologists who have examined the 6b (4) scenario have concluded it avoids the elevated water temperature conditions that impaired the reproduction of winter-run Chinook salmon in 2014, while not significantly adversely affecting other salmon runs or steelhead. In this way the 6b (4) scenario is reasonably protective of salmonids and the best of our poor options.

In light of Governor Brown's Executive Order which directs and authorizes the Board to improve water supplies to areas that have been overwhelmed by shortages, a temperature management regime or order imposed by the Board that results in avoidable termination of CVP diversions at Jones would be inconsistent with those directives and would cause direct harm to the people of the San Joaquin Valley. Reclamation has unique operational knowledge and the expertise to identify a workable plan. After considering all of the conditions in consultation with biologists, Reclamation has determined that Scenario 6b (4) is the most acceptable option in order to achieve a reasonable balance and minimize harm to people and the environment. Additionally, while Scenario 6b (4) will have the least negative impact on a region already severely damaged by the drought, it is important to recognize that, because of a broken water system and flawed priorities, decisions where all of the options are damaging are having to be made.

On behalf of the people of the San Joaquin Valley, I strongly urge the Board to accept the Bureau's determination on this matter. Moving forward with any other option would only perpetuate the water crisis and unnecessarily increase the impacts of this devastating drought for the people that I serve.

Sincerely,



Jim Costa
Member of Congress