



Statement

State Water Board rescinds suspension of Delta water quality requirement

March 9, 2023

In late February, the State Water Resources Control Board [approved](#) a petition from the operators of the two major state and federal water projects to temporarily suspend a Delta water quality requirement in their water rights permits from February through March to improve water supplies in case dry conditions persisted through the rest of winter and into spring. This approval recognized the need to stabilize water supply conditions given the uncertainty of the water year due to extreme weather and drought.

The State Water Board has been closely monitoring hydrological conditions since its approval on Feb. 21 of that Temporary Urgency Change Petition from the Department of Water Resources and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

Today, thanks to significant rain and snow we've received, the board [determined](#) there is no longer an urgent need to suspend the water quality requirement. All other relevant terms of the [order](#) remain in place.

Background

DWR and Reclamation are owners and operators of the State Water Project and Central Valley Project, respectively (collectively, 'the Projects'). In 1995, the board adopted a set of water quality objectives to protect fish and wildlife, municipal and agricultural supplies, and other beneficial uses of water in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The board subsequently implemented the objectives in Water Right Decision 1641 (or D-1641), which imposed conditions on the operations of the Projects. Under certain hydrological conditions, D-1641 requires water project operators to bypass or release enough water to maintain salinity conditions favorable to native fish species, including Delta smelt and longfin smelt, in an area with good habitat for the species.

The order granted by the board on Feb. 21 included the condition that DWR and Reclamation must report the volume of additional water saved from not meeting the Delta water quality requirement, and to evaluate whether any of these supplies will be used for fish and wildlife purposes. These terms remain in place.

