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California Water Alliance Calls for Congressional Hearings on Federal Mismanagement of California's Water Resources

June 14, 2016 — The California Water Alliance (CalWA), called on Congress Tuesday to exert its oversight responsibilities, conduct hearings into plans to divert California's drinking water supply to endangered species and water quality management and to investigate recent arbitrary and capricious regulatory plans announced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Services.

"USF&WS and NOAA/NMFS exhibit no understanding whatsoever of the consequences of their water mandates and have failed to consult in good faith with the state or even with each other," said Aubrey Bettencourt, CalWA's executive director.

"While some California Congressional members on both sides of the aisle have **expressed concern** and asked for answers, it is time for Congress to convene hearings regarding these environmental enforcement decisions that present a peril to public health affecting California's most vulnerable populations," Bettencourt added.

(<http://costa.house.gov/sites/costa.house.gov/files/2016-06-09 LTR.Members to Interior and Commerce re Operations issues.pdf>)

One of the plans being discussed would cut spring and early summer flows from Shasta Reservoir to help spawning salmon, depriving cities and food producers of water the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Central Valley Project and State Water Project previously promised would be available this year.

A separate plan would force Folsom Lake and Oroville water managers to again increase flows to compensate for Shasta's cutbacks — sharply drawing down those

nearly full reservoirs as they did in 2015 — in an attempt to improve water quality in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and preserve the nearly extinct Delta smelt, a federally designated endangered species.

Both plans stand in marked contrast to **federal and state agencies' characterizations** of the state's water outlook just weeks ago and would leave little reserve should the drought continue to 2017 or beyond.

http://www.mercurynews.com/drought/ci_29714209/california-drought-water-deliveries-from-federal-central-valley)

"By changing their minds, farmers that committed seed to the soil are being left high and dry," said Bettencourt. "So are 25 million Californians that receive drinking water from the two projects, along with wildlife refuges that are suffering without enough water to preserve rapidly declining waterfowl and shorebird populations."

"Drought aside, the system is broken. These mandatory cuts are in conflict with each other, and result in a failure to consider and meet the whole state's needs."

"Congress must act now to stop this carnage, determine who is responsible, and protect our state," concluded Bettencourt. "Hearings and action by both houses of Congress must weigh all alternatives and find remedies to the conflicts created by well-meaning, but unworkable prior laws written for other times and conditions."

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About the California Water Alliance

The California Water Alliance is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness about the nature of water and promoting long-term, sustainable solutions that meet the health and security needs of families, cities, businesses, farmers and the environment. To learn more, visit www.CaliforniaWaterAlliance.org.