



Association of California Water Agencies

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October 12, 2016

Dear California Congressional Delegation:

This letter is a plea for action from a large and diverse association of public water agencies in California. The Association of California Water Agencies serves approximately 430 public water supply agencies that span northern and southern California and supply water to both our agricultural and urban economies. We believe that the entire state of California would benefit from action by this Congress in passing overdue drought legislation before the end of the year.

The 2016 water year has just come to a close. As we look back a year ago, we recall the anticipation that an El Nino condition in the Pacific Ocean would give rise to winter storms and provide relief to California's drought-depleted water supplies. The winter came, and with it some of the most significant storms of recent years. But, those storms provided little water supply benefit for the California economy due to federal decision-making. At crucial times, decisions made by federal regulatory agencies severely restricted the operations of the federal Central Valley Project and State Water Project, even when Delta outflows were substantial. Even with the storms of the past year, ACWA recognizes that California remains in the grip of an historic drought. We would expect that federal policies should provide assistance in meeting water supply needs during drought conditions, but instead at almost every turn federal decisions restricted project operations, preventing water during storm events from being put into storage south of the Delta for later delivery to our farms and cities. During 2016, these restrictive federal policies had a far greater negative impact on water supply than did the drought.

In California, the core tenet of state water policy is that we will manage this vital resource for the "coequal" goals of improving both water supply reliability and our environment. This policy was established in historic 2009 legislation, which codified a fundamental change in how we manage water in California. California needs a partnership with the federal government in accomplishing this policy objective. Instead, all too often we experience unbalanced federal decisions that unreasonably favor species protection over water supply, with little scientific justification and little prospect of any actual environmental benefit, but with very large and real negative impacts on water supply. Current federal policy undermines the California state policy of coequal goals. Congress has an obligation to change that. ACWA believes that it is sound policy for the Congress to pass legislation that directs the federal government to provide assistance in increasing water supply during this extended drought.

Californians want both reliable water supplies for their economy and a healthy environment. Regrettably, under current federal policy they are getting neither. With the 2017 water year just begun, the time is now for Congress to realize its significant investment in trying to develop a bi-partisan, bi-cameral solution. ACWA urges the Congress to pass meaningful drought legislation now.

Sincerely,

Timothy Quinn
Executive Director