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Republican Congressmen Blast Administration's Misleading Announcement on Water Delivery to San Joaquin Valley Farmers

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Republican Members from California and the House Natural Resources Committee criticized Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar for his misleading announcement yesterday that his Department is taking “additional steps” to provide relief to California’s San Joaquin Valley farmers who are suffering from a man-made regulatory drought.

The Department of the Interior announced that it would “make available” nearly 400,000 acre feet of water from the San Luis Reservoir. Secretary Salazar failed to explain that this is not “new” water, but actually saved water bought and paid for by water users. In this case, at the end of every year, farmers conserve water to ensure that they will have enough water for the beginning of the next planting season. Farmers have paid for this water and store it in the San Luis Reservoir, as they do every year. The Department of the Interior is under contract to deliver this stored water back to the farmers. Secretary Salazar’s claim that this “assured water supply” is a result of recent storms is misleading and provides false hope to Valley residents.

“The actions of the Department of Interior are a classic ponzi scheme that would make Bernard Madoff jealous. In this case, the Secretary is providing water users with the water they already bought. The Secretary’s generosity knows no bounds. Mr. Salazar seems to think he can gift to farmers their own water. This kind of thinking is exactly why radical environmentalists dominate Washington. Salazar, the Obama Administration, and the Democratic Congress refuse to recognize property rights. Whether the property in question is your water, land or hard earned tax dollars, everything is fair game to them. If you are lucky enough to get to keep what you have worked hard for, Obama and his crew will send out a press release and take credit.” -
Congressman Devin Nunes, sponsor of H.R. 3105 (CA- 21)

“The Administration is publicly patting itself on the back for doing exactly what they are obligated to do – provide farmers with the water they already own. Political spin will not help the thousands who are unemployed, and it will not help the farmers who have had no choice but to sell their land and lay off workers. They need real action, and they need it now. We have the ability to solve this problem - all we have to do is turn on the pumps. If Secretary Salazar wants to prove that this Administration hasn’t turned its back on San Joaquin Valley communities, he will support legislation to restore the flow of water.” -
House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Republican Doc Hastings (WA-04)

"The day after our water forum in Fresno, the Interior Secretary used his authority to "release" up to 400,000 acre-feet of water already owned by Central Valley farmers. Having demonstrated his authority to act, he now needs to follow through and release the water that he holds hostage to the Delta Smelt," said Congressman McClintock –
House Water and Power Ranking Republican Tom McClintock (CA-04)

"This is just one more example where this Administration gives the appearance of addressing a problem, when all they are really doing is providing window-dressing. Secretary Salazar is playing politics when we need real, long-term solutions that bring people back to work. As I heard at our recent Congressional Water Forum in Fresno, the time to act is now." - **Western Caucus Chairman Rob Bishop (UT-01)**

"We are in a dire water situation in California, and are facing a situation where a tiny fish is taking precedence over our local farmers and workers, which is killing jobs and our local economies. The Central Valley should not be ignored as we suffer thorough a man made drought caused by regulations resulting in mandated water reductions. Our farmers, families, and communities are tired of the continued lip service paid to our problems, and it is time for the Administration and the Democratic Leadership to wake up and get the message that jobs grow where water flows." - **Congressman Kevin McCarthy (CA-22)**

Background:

On Monday, January 25th, Republican Members of Congress hosted a Water Forum in Fresno, California on addressing the San Joaquin Valley water crisis. Secretary Salazar turned down an invitation to participate in this forum or send a representative from the Department of the Interior.

Hundreds of famers and residents throughout the Valley attended the meeting and expressed the urgent need for the government to take action to restore the flow of water to farmers.

Congressman Devin Nunes has introduced [Turn on the Pumps Act \(H.R. 3105\)](#), to provide immediate relief. This bill would suspend portions of the Endangered Species Act to turn the pumps on to full operating capacity. Secretary Salazar and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi have refused to support this legislation.

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