



March 30, 2009

California Drought Exacerbated by Man-Made Actions *Water Being Diverted from Families on the Farm to Fish in the Bay*

"This is still a pretty decent drought but nothing unusual...We were prepared, as usual, for the drought, but they have taken all the tools away from us." -- Mr. Tim Quinn, Executive Director, Association of California Water Agencies, Forbes, March 17, 2009

On Tuesday, the House Natural Resources Committee will hold a hearing on what federal and California state agencies are doing to mitigate the impacts of drought on land, fisheries and water users. California has overcome natural drought for decades, but the current drought has been made much worse by man-made actions involving the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Fact: California is experiencing a drought

- In 2008, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger formally declared a statewide drought.
- For the first time ever, farmers on the west-side of the San Joaquin Valley have been told they will receive 0% water allocation from the Bureau of Reclamation for their crops this season.
- While droughts occur regularly in California, there has recently been heavy precipitation in much of northern California and the Sierra Nevadas (95% of normal). Lack of precipitation is not solely to blame for this current drought.

Fact: California is experiencing a man-made drought

- In May 2007, a ruling by Federal District Court Judge Oliver Wanger culminated in a revised Biological Opinion that re-allocated increased amounts of water towards endangered Delta Smelt, a three-inch fish.
- This year alone, 83 billion gallons of water (normally dedicated to farmers and southern California communities) has been used for this purpose.
- Although farmers don't have the water they need and urban communities face water rationing, there is no proof that this water loss to the ocean will actually benefit the Delta Smelt fish.

Fact: California is experiencing a man-made drought with devastating consequences

- A study by UC Davis found that up to 35,000 San Joaquin Valley jobs will be lost and 300,000 acres of farm land won't be used in 2009 because water has been diverted from farm land to the Delta Smelt fish.
- The Central Valley town of Mendota, which recently had to turn away unemployed farm

families from food lines, is currently experiencing a 40% unemployment rate.

- California is the salad bowl of the world. No water means less production and a smaller food supply, likely increasing food prices nationwide.
- Environmental mandates since 1992 have decimated farming communities. One witness testified before the House Natural Resources Committee in early 2008 about related job and crop loss on his farm since 1992:

Years	Acres Farmed	Labor	
		Peak	Average
'88-'92	8000+	150	86
1998	5000+ -	110	51
2002	3500+ -	75	35
2005	2700+ -	50	20
2007	1800	35	15

Fact: Water cutbacks caused by Delta Smelt are just the beginning for this year.

- Impacted farmers are having a hard time getting water transferred from other regions to make up for the 0% allocation because of protections over the endangered Giant garter snake.
- The federal government is expected to come out with a plan for Chinook salmon and steelhead in June 2009 that will lead to further water cutbacks.

Fact: Real action by the Administration and commonsense ESA reform is needed to end the assault on our nation's farmers.

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