



## Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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### **Chairman Hastings: The People of San Joaquin Valley Can't Wait Any Longer For Congress to Act**

*"This bill is a chance to right the regulatory wrongs of the past, to end future man-made droughts, and protect the jobs and economic livelihoods of farm families and workers"*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings delivered the following statement on the House floor today in support of H.R. 3964, *the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley Emergency Water Delivery Act*.

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"Mr./Madam Chairman, the House today is considering H.R. 3964, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley Emergency Water Delivery Act.

Like California, my Central Washington district is heavily dependent on irrigated water to support our local economy and agricultural industry. I understand the importance of having a stable, reliable water supply. And I also understand the economic devastation that is caused when that water supply is shut off, particularly when that shut-off is avoidable.

California is facing an emergency situation. For years, San Joaquin Valley farmers have been fighting against federal regulations and environmental lawsuits that have diverted water supplies in order to help a three-inch fish. In 2009, there was a deliberate diversion of over 300 billion gallons of water away from farmers. As a result, thousands of farm workers lost their jobs, unemployment reached 40 percent in some communities, and thousands of acres of fertile farmland dried up.

As Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, I've traveled to Fresno, California and seen the effects of natural and man-made drought firsthand. We've held multiple hearings and heard the pleas of communities that simply want the water turned back on and their livelihoods restored. We've seen farmers, who normally help feed the Nation, being sent to wait in line at food banks and, in some cases, being served carrots imported from China.

That's why, last Congress, the House of Representatives passed bipartisan legislation to restore the flow of water to avoid future droughts. Unfortunately, the Senate refused to act on this bill. In fact, the Senate did not take up a single California water bill last Congress.

So once again, we are back on the floor of the House with legislation to help California communities once again facing water shut-offs. But now the situation is far more dire.

The lack of rainfall has exacerbated the man-made drought and last month the California Governor declared a state of emergency. A man-made drought, coupled with a natural drought, equals disaster and requires immediate action. Of course, these conditions could have been partially avoided if the Senate had only acted on the House-passed legislation – or responded with an alternative to it - last Congress.

This comprehensive solution before us today, almost identical to what the House passed last Congress, would restore some water deliveries that will be cut-off due to federal regulations and environmental lawsuits, ensure a reliable water supply for people and fish, secure water rights, and save taxpayer money by ending unnecessary and dubious government projects.

I want to stress that this crisis does not just impact California, but has rippling effects across the entire Nation. California's San Joaquin Valley is a salad bowl for the world and provides a significant share of the fruits and vegetables for our country. Food grows where water flows. When there is no water, our food supply suffers, resulting in higher food prices across the country and increased reliance on foreign food sources.

This bill is a chance to right the regulatory wrongs of the past, to end future man-made droughts, and protect the jobs and economic livelihoods of farm families and workers.

The people of the San Joaquin Valley cannot wait any longer for Congress to act. As the title of this bill suggests, it is truly an emergency for many and time is running out. I sincerely hope – that unlike the last Congress – our Senate colleagues take up this bill or propose a meaningful alternative to it. Those communities facing massive unemployment deserve nothing less.

This bill is supported by the entire Republican California delegation and I commend my colleagues from California for their hard work in getting this bill to the floor today.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill and reserve the balance of my time.”

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