

Written Testimony of  
David J. Guy

Executive Director  
Northern California Water Association

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Committee on Resources  
Water and Power Subcommittee

Hearing on Water Supply Vulnerabilities in the Sacramento/San Joaquin River System

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Dear Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, my name is David Guy. I am the Executive Director of the Northern California Water Association (NCWA). We appreciate the Subcommittee convening a hearing today to discuss and develop solutions to address water supply vulnerabilities in California's Central Valley.

NCWA is a geographically diverse organization, extending from California's Coast Range to the Sierra Nevada foothills, and nearly 180 miles from Redding to Sacramento. Our members rely on the waters of the Sacramento, Feather, Yuba and American Rivers, smaller tributaries and groundwater to irrigate more than 900,000 acres that produce every type of food and fiber grown in the region. Many of our members also provide water supplies to state and federal wildlife refuges, and much of this land serves as important seasonal wetlands for migrating waterfowl, shorebirds and other wildlife. NCWA also represents the local governments and the business leadership in the region.

We welcome the opportunity to provide the Northern California perspective on public safety and water supply security and to present both the opportunities and challenges we now face in California. You can be sure that Northern California water users, in concert with counties and local governments throughout the region, are committed to help improve public safety, water supply reliability, water quality and the environment.

The Subcommittee's interest in California's water security is appropriate and very timely in the wake of the hurricanes along the Gulf Coast and given the importance of a successful resolution to the environmental and water supply problems in the Central Valley and particularly the Sacramento–San Joaquin River Delta and San Francisco Bay (Bay-Delta). The Bay-Delta is a tremendous economic and environmental resource to California and the nation, and there is much at stake in how we implement the numerous ecosystem restoration and water management actions. Put simply, people throughout California are vulnerable to various events in the Central Valley, including prolonged droughts, devastating floods, earthquakes and what appears to be a change in climate that may affect snow pack in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

We believe the recent California Water Plan (Draft Bulletin 160) provides a framework for California, with the assistance and leadership of Congress and the Administration, to address the vulnerabilities in the Sacramento/San Joaquin River systems. This framework contains two major initiatives--maintaining statewide water systems and empowering regional solutions—that we encourage the Subcommittee to support.

#### Maintain Statewide Water Systems

California depends on vast statewide water management systems to provide clean and reliable water supplies, protect lives and property from flood, withstand drought and sustain environmental values. A significant part of California relies on the Bay-Delta system for its water supplies. As a result, California needs stability in the Delta. This stability should include structural stability, such as the integrity of Delta levees in the face of earthquakes or tidal action, and it will require political stability with respect to the way in which water flows through the Delta. Although most of Northern California does not divert water from the Delta, we recognize the importance of the Delta for water supplies throughout the State and support efforts to solve the water supply and environmental issues in the Delta.

After 11 years, it is clear that there is little confidence in the Bay-Delta solution being discussed as part of the CALFED program. Most importantly, we need a sustainable solution to the public safety and water supply issues in the Delta. There is a tremendous opportunity to focus on the Bay-Delta and to undertake a new evaluation of various options that will

protect Northern California water rights and supplies, enhance the environment, and improve water supplies and quality derived from the Bay-Delta. This, in turn, will provide stability in the Bay-Delta and decrease vulnerability throughout California.

Additionally, California needs an aggressive investment in the State's flood management system and changes in the way we think about flood management to fully protect public safety. Northern California has always experienced devastating floods, including the most recent flooding in early January 1997. High winter and spring flows, coupled with the fact that many of the rivers in Northern California serve as water conveyance facilities for the rest of the state, makes flood protection critical for public safety to protect the citizens and property in Northern California.

Integrating both surface and groundwater storage programs into the existing statewide water system can help California assure public safety and increase the water supplies available for all purposes in California, including cities, farms wildlife refuges and managed wetlands and fish. In the Sacramento Valley, for example, North of Delta Offstream Storage (Sites) could be integrated with the existing system to provide additional flood control at Lake Shasta and to provide valuable water for the Delta during critical times for fish, birds, cities and farms.

#### Empower Integrated Regional Water Management Programs

Regional planning and the implementation of strategies that are developed by leaders in the various regions throughout the state are critical to meet the various water supply needs in California. Most importantly, regional strategies build on the successful efforts that have been undertaken or are underway throughout a region to meet water supply, water quality and ecosystem objectives at the regional and local level. California is a diverse state where complex water policy decisions are difficult to fashion in a manner that allows a simple solution to fit problems that may exist in various regions across the state. As a consequence, regionally based policies and programs are the most effective and cost effective way to integrate the various water rights and supplies for a particular region and to undertake the efforts necessary to improve water quality and the ecosystem. We therefore support empowering regional solutions and partnerships throughout the state to help serve California's total water needs. We believe California can best advance the broad interests of the state by helping to fulfill the promise of regional programs and integrated water management.

By implementing these management strategies, regions' can plan, invest, and diversify their water portfolios. These strategies will help a region become more self-sufficient with local supplies and will minimize conflicts with other resource management efforts. NCWA and the Northern California water users have embarked on an integrated water management program that has broad support from water suppliers and local governments throughout Northern California. The Sacramento Valley has been developing an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) to meet local needs and to increase both the flexibility of the water system and the water available for multiple uses in the Sacramento Valley and other areas of the state. This integrated program includes fish passage improvements (fish screens and siphons), groundwater management, environmental water programs, water quality improvements, evaluation of the Sites off-stream reservoir, flood protection, water use efficiency programs, intra-regional water transfers and exchanges, and watershed management.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee today. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please call me at 916.442.8333.