

January 19, 2017

The Honorable David G. Valadao
1728 Longworth Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Valadao,

California's Central Valley, which provides the majority of fruits and vegetables for the country, has been suffering from a long drought made worse by federal regulations. Long-term drought also is impacting other major agricultural areas across the Western United States.

To date, over 300 billion gallons of water have been diverted away from California's Central Valley in an effort to protect the Delta Smelt and salmonid species, including Chinook and coho salmon and steelhead.

Agricultural interests throughout the West are seeing their property and water rights decaying, lands available for cultivation becoming smaller due to protection mandates for endangered species of concern and surface and groundwater formerly available to their operations being diverted away from their farms and ranches.

Today, communities and farmers in the Central Valley and throughout the state are receiving less water — if any at all — than the amounts for which they previously contracted and paid. The water and agricultural production system that established California as a beacon of ingenuity and productivity has been pushed to the wayside for a bait fish without regard for scientific findings that show little improvement in Delta smelt populations. This, in turn, has devastated California's farmers, communities and even the environment. They now fallow hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland and struggle to keep many additional growing areas active by drilling expensive wells to tap deep and costly groundwater reserves. The result is that many communities in the Central Valley have run completely dry, with their citizens relying solely on truck deliveries for potable water to use for drinking, bathing and cooking.

Across the Southwest, water compacts dividing the Colorado River resource between various states and Mexico have become unworkable and adjudication and revision efforts difficult because of the decade-long drought and dwindling Rocky Mountain snowfall. States lack the necessary tools to coordinate federal water infrastructure with dams, canals and aqueducts owned by state and local water entities. These difficulties are threatening the public health and stifling the economic expansion of the entire Southwest.

In the Intermountain West, the Columbia River and its tributaries are another case where long-standing water rights are under attack. Federal impositions of mandates affecting water capture

and releases are upending ranching, agriculture and economic viability in areas with vast swaths of land held by the U.S. Government.

All of these matters require remedies, but none so much as the Central Valley suffering under California's and the federal government's heavy hands.

For years, you have fought to bring water back to the Central Valley; this year is no different. You have introduced H.R. 23, the Gaining Responsibility On Water (GROW) Act of 2017

We support the GROW Act and encourage you to seek co-sponsors and endorsements from California's congressional delegation and across the West. Your legislation would ensure reliable water deliveries for our valley, secure private property and senior water rights, and save millions of dollars by replacing wasteful protectionist plans with sane and sensible alternatives.

To ensure water reliability in the future, the GROW Act obligates the federal government to complete feasibility studies for multiple water storage projects in California and increases the scope of investigation of dam safety throughout the West, including planning for expansion needs with concrete construction proposals.

GROW will improve the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta Estuary and promote better water reliability for all recipients of the Central Valley Project's water.

Now is the time to enact this long-term, meaningful solution to California's water supply issues. We add our voices to thousands of supporters of your legislation in hope that the GROW Act is the next step taken by Congress to address the challenges facing California's Central Valley and the West.

We look forward to working with you on advancing H.R. 23, the GROW Act, this session.

Sincerely,



Aubrey J. D. Bettencourt

Executive Director

California Water Alliance