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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MARIO SANTOYO  
*Telephone*

(559) 779-7595

*E-Mail*

msantoyo@sjvwia.org

# SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY WATER INFRASTRUCTURE AUTHORITY

January 18, 2016

The Honorable David Valadao  
United States House of Representatives  
1728 Longworth House Office Bldg  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**BY ELECTRONIC MAIL**

Dear Congressman Valadao:

The San Joaquin Valley Water Infrastructure Authority (SJWVIA) Board of Directors — representing those who live, work and do business in Merced, Madera, Tulare, Kings and Fresno counties — is appreciative of your continued efforts to craft legislation that constructively and progressively addresses California's ongoing water crisis.

H.R. 23, the Gaining Responsibility on Water (GROW) Act, builds logically upon last year's bipartisan water legislation, the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIN), which has been signed into law. That measure is already having positive effects. So would H.R. 23.

All of the territory represented by our Authority's elected officials is located within California's San Joaquin Valley. Our constituents include growers, farm workers and those involved in many hundreds of farming-related service businesses. All of these people, and others in the communities and counties we serve, work hard to provide the majority of fruits and vegetables upon which the United States relies.

Our valley, like much of California, has suffered from acute shortages of water over the past several years. Some of this has been the result of natural drought effects but federal regulations and court mandates have made these shortages far worse, creating tremendous economic and social harm. Yes, we have been blessed in recent weeks by huge and welcomed storms but, ironically, these repeated heavy rainfall events have led to very large flood releases because the valley's reservoirs, particularly on the San Joaquin River system, are too small to control and fully capture all of the extremely high mountain runoff as it is occurring.

That is why the SJWVIA is so interested in the many surface water storage provisions within your bill. Our joint-powers Authority was organized last year to pursue means of developing one of California's most vitally-need surface water storage projects — Temperance Flat Dam and Reservoir on the San Joaquin River northeast of Fresno.

Although the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is a valued and helpful partner in our endeavors, we believe H.R. 23's provisions aimed at expediting feasibility studies and expedited permitting for water storage and expanded infrastructure can only help such development efforts planned and contemplated here, elsewhere in California and around the nation.

Perhaps even more importantly for the Temperance Flat Project from a federal standpoint, your bill would halt and eliminate consideration currently aimed by the Bureau of Land Management at including a segment of the San Joaquin River located within the proposed reservoir site as a federal Wild and Scenic River. Such a designation would essentially block Temperance Flat, even though more than 20 years of federal investment and study, directed and carried out at a cost of approximately \$36 million to date by the Interior Department and USBR, have gone into the proposed project.

Our board also concurs with comments that other valley water agencies have offered on your bill regarding the Bay-Delta situation that has caused so much water supply grief in our region. Codifying the Bay-Delta Accord is of vital importance. We are pleased with the bill's provision that if the Central Valley Project and State Water Project are operated consistent with the Bay-Delta Accord, they would then be in conformance with the Endangered Species Act's requirements.

We also share our neighboring water agencies' beliefs that the San Joaquin River Restoration Program must be addressed and significantly overhauled. After a decade, it is obvious that this program's implementation has not and probably cannot be accomplished as anticipated.

Water reliability, since the beginning of settlement and development within the San Joaquin Valley in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has always been the foundation sustaining our region's livelihoods, business and agricultural activity, and well being. This basic foundation is being continually chipped away by the sorts of federal actions, laws, regulations, mandates and decisions your bill seeks to correct. It is the SJVWIA's desire to work closely with you and your colleagues to solve these many problems and bring water supply reliability in California and the San Joaquin Valley back to where it belongs, allowing our state and region to move forward.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

  
J. Steven Worthley  
President