



## Westlands Water District

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### **Statement by Thomas W. Birmingham, General Manager Westlands Water District**

#### ***Bureau of Reclamation Allocation Announcement***

**FRESNO, CA** - Today the Bureau of Reclamation announced that the water allocation for South-of-Delta Central Valley Project agricultural water service contractors has been increased from 30 percent to 40 percent. The increase is good news for farmers in Westlands Water District, who will now be able to plant crops in fields that otherwise would have been fallowed. Westlands greatly appreciates Reclamation's efforts to make this announcement at a time when this information can be used by farmers to make planting and other decisions critical to their operations. Even though March and the first two weeks of April were exceptionally wet (March 2012 was the seventh wettest March on record), Reclamation's ability to move water across the Delta is greatly constrained under biological opinions issued under the Endangered Species Act. Reclamation showed great ingenuity and flexibility to develop an operations plan that will enable it to export sufficient water to support this increased allocation, and Westlands appreciates the attention given to this year's water allocation at the highest levels of the Department of the Interior and Reclamation.

From a different perspective, this 40 percent exemplifies the extent to which our water supply infrastructure is broken and how important it is that we find long-term solutions to problems in the Delta. Over the last six weeks, when there was surplus water in the Delta, we were unable to take advantage of opportunities to capture this water to meet existing demands and to place more water in storage for use later in this irrigation season. A very conservative estimate is that restrictions on project operations imposed under the Endangered Species Act during this six week period cost South-of-Delta Central Valley Project contractors more than 180,000 acre-feet of water. This is enough water to irrigate 72,000 acres; and with this additional water, our allocation could easily have been 55 percent.

California cannot continue to rely on a water system that is unable to take advantage of record high levels of precipitation and run-off. The people of California are faced with a simple decision: either invest in new water supply infrastructure, including storage and through-Delta conveyance that will allow us to more efficiently manage water supplies when they are abundant, or allow the economy of the state to retrogress because we lack the facilities to meet the needs of all water users, including the environment, farmers, and urban dwellers.

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