



Westlands Water District

3130 N. Fresno Street, P.O. Box 6056, Fresno, California 93703-6056, (559) 224-1523, FAX (559) 241-6277

PRESS RELEASE

April 1, 2016

For Immediate Release

Contact: Gayle Holman
(559) 905-6736
Westlands Water District

Statement of Westlands Water District on Bureau of Reclamation's Allocation Announcement

FRESNO, CA – Despite above average runoff into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Rivers Delta and near average snowpack in the northern Sierra Nevada this year, farmers on the westside of the San Joaquin Valley, from Tracy to Kettleman City, will suffer from grossly inadequate water supplies from the Central Valley Project. Although the Bureau of Reclamation's announcement that these farmers will receive a 5% allocation is certainly better than zero allocation they received in 2014 and 2015, today's allocation announcement clearly illustrates the degree to which the once-lauded Central Valley Project is broken.

It may be difficult for some people to understand how, in a year in which north-of-Delta Central Valley Project agricultural water service contractors receive a 100% allocation, south-of-Delta agricultural water service contractors receive only 5%. The north-of-Delta contractors are not more "senior" than south-of-Delta contractors. And the State Water Resources Control Board and federal courts have both held that area of origin laws do not give north-of-Delta contractors any priority over contractors in the Central Valley Project export service area. The discrepancy between the allocations for these two groups of contractors is simply the result of constraints imposed on the Project's Delta operations by the 2008 Delta smelt biological opinion and the 2009 salmonid biological opinion.

Since December 2015, more than 8 million acre-feet of water has flowed into the Delta, while pumping into key south-of-the Delta reservoirs has been severely limited by the 2008 biological opinion for the Delta smelt. Indeed, through January and February of 2016, the Central Valley Project Jones Pumping Plant diverted less water than in January and February of 2015, when extended drought conditions resulted in very little inflow into the Delta.

Notwithstanding Reclamation's ability to make some water available to farmers, it is likely that we will experience another year when more than 200,000 acres of prime farm land in Westlands will be fallowed. This means not only increased costs and a loss of revenue for farmers, but a loss of tens-of-thousands of farm worker and farm related jobs. In other words, despite the significant improvement in rain and snow produced by

the 2016 El Nino, economic hardship will continue to plague the people who live and work on the westside of the San Joaquin Valley.

We often hear that in order to make California's water supply system work, we have to implement a "big gulp, little sip" strategy; to take advantage of periods of high flow so that additional water can be left in the Delta during dry periods. But if the first three months of 2016 were not a time when a "big gulp" could be taken, there will not exist such a time. Simply put, the rigidity imposed on operation of the Central Valley Project by the 2008 biological opinion for Delta smelt has failed our communities. But tragically, the current federal policy, which wasted more than 250 billion gallons of water into the ocean in January, February, and March, has failed to protect the species while simultaneously allowing the health of the Delta to rapidly decline.

As people, communities and agriculture try to survive this disaster, we should not forget that these decisions are affecting the consumer. Jobs and farmland will continue to be eliminated and the safest food supply grown in our nation will be compromised as local farming operations are outsourced to foreign soil.

The decisions made today will have lasting impacts on the viability, strength and resilience of our nation's most abundant, safest source of food.

Is that the legacy we want for our future generations?

#