

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 23, 2021

The Honorable Scott de la Vega
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Wynn Coggins
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Acting Secretary de la Vega and Acting Secretary Coggins:

As you serve under the new administration, we are writing to emphasize California's water needs and to voice our strong support for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) new coordinated long-term operations plan for the Central Valley Project (CVP) and the California State Water Project (SWP), including the associated biological opinions developed by the U.S. Department of the Interior (Interior) and U.S. Department of Commerce (Commerce), completed last year.

Water is the lifeline to California's farmers, small businesses, local and regional economies, communities, and environment. We all depend on this essential resource.

The Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act, signed into law by President Barack Obama, directed the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Commerce to develop a new operations plan, which was completed in February 2020.

The independently peer-reviewed biological opinions and corresponding operations plan were informed by the best available science and will provide needed flexibility and opportunities for coordination with related entities, including Reclamation and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). The updated biological opinions will help provide certainty and secure water for communities, families, and farmers who need it now and will need it in the future, particularly in severe drought years, while continuing to ensure robust protections for listed species and the environment. Delivering water will help improve the economy in some of the most depressed regions of our state.

As background, on August 2, 2016, Reclamation and DWR requested a re-initiation of consultation on the operations plan of the CVP and the SWP with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This re-initiation, pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, responded to Reclamation and DWR's responsibility to update the existing operations plans and biological opinions that were outdated as a result of new available scientific information from collaborative science efforts.

In October 2018, a Presidential Memorandum on Promoting the Reliable Supply and Delivery of Water in the West instructed the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Commerce to ensure the completion of the new operations plan for the CVP and the SWP and the updated biological opinions, as directed in the WIIN Act. The Reclamation operations plan review and rewrite were informed by the biological opinions as they were being updated with the most accurate and recent science-based data. The federal agencies followed the instructions and completed the review and update of the biological opinions after rigorous scientific research and not one, but two, independent peer-reviews by outside experts. In February 2020, Reclamation signed the record of decision, implementing the proposed action consulted on in the 2019 biological opinions.

We hope you agree with our assessment on the need to keep the new Reclamation operations plan and related science-based biological opinions intact. Our communities deserve nothing less. As such, the Delegation included on this letter would like to be updated on the status of the current litigation on the biological opinions and the 2021 water season upcoming water allocation. Please contact Amanda Hall at Amanda.Hall@mail.house.gov to schedule this immediately.

Sincerely,



David G. Valadao
Member of Congress



Kevin McCarthy
House Republican Leader



Ken Calvert
Member of Congress



Mike Garcia
Member of Congress



Darrell Issa
Member of Congress



Young Kim
Member of Congress



Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



Tom McClintock
Member of Congress



Devin Nunes
Member of Congress



Jay Obernolte
Member of Congress



Michelle Steel
Member of Congress