



The Western Water and American Food Security Act of 2015

Legislative Summary

California is enduring its worst drought in 1,200 years, and a growing number of communities across the West have become impacted by severe drought conditions. Although this challenge is not new to the arid West, it is compounded by a complex and often contradictory system of laws, court decisions, and regulations, at the state and federal level, that are failing the needs of both people and species.

California's water system is one of the most sophisticated in the world and has served as a catalyst for economic prosperity. That pioneering approach has since been abandoned and the effects have devastated our communities, threatened our food security, and have placed undue burden on our environment.

Communities Grow When Water Flows

California is the eighth largest economy in the *world* and has long served as a beacon for growth and innovation. From Palo Alto to the Central Valley to the Mojave Desert, California is home to some of our greatest innovators and achievements that ensure the United States remains the world's leader. Water is the lifeblood of our State and failure to deliver a reliable and affordable supply in California and the Western United States jeopardizes our ability to continue to grow a more prosperous, healthy, and secure United States.

Food Security

California feeds our nation's families, as half of the fruits, vegetables, and nuts consumed in the U.S. are grown in California. If California is unable produce the food our nation needs, we will be forced to turn to other nations where pesticide use and farming techniques are often far less regulated than the in United States. Furthermore, California's contribution as "the nation's salad bowl" is essential to a healthier America as the fight against obesity continues.

Environmental Challenges

When water is flushed out to the ocean, California communities are left with measures of last resort. To survive during these times of drought, communities are forced to drill for water in aquifers beneath the surface. When wells run dry and the aquifers are depleted, land subsidence and irreversible environmental damage occurs.

The *Western Water and American Food Security Act of 2015* would rebalance water policies in California and the West. Requiring federal and state agencies to use better science, and rooting their regulatory decisions in that new science will provide more water provided to our parched communities. It also enacts permitting reforms aimed at building infrastructure to capture water for humans and species. This would enable the movement and storage of water throughout California to better prepare for future droughts, so that the great frontier can continue to grow.

Relying on Better Science in California

The *Western Water and American Food Security Act of 2015* does not eviscerate the Endangered Species Act. Instead, it would incorporate an empirical approach that even Bill Nye could endorse by requiring regulators to back up claims of disruption to protected fish species with actual evidence. And if disruptions to fish populations do occur, all available mitigation options must be considered before water that is contracted and paid for by our communities is diverted to the ocean.

Flexibility to Plan Ahead

When Mother Nature blesses California and the Western United States with periods of rain and snow, this bill would provide state and federal regulators direction and flexibility to capture water for delivery to Central and Southern California. This bill also takes a long-term approach to helping California and the Western United States by requiring the federal government to complete consideration of feasibility studies for multiple water storage projects in California that have been languishing in bureaucratic purgatory for up to ten years. By creating a process to build new storage facilities in the West, we can capture more water during wet years for use in dry years.

