

Water Horizons

October, 2005

Valley Water Alliance Update

Nunes Works Hard for CVPIA Reform

In 1992 the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) was introduced to assure water resources for the environment as "equal project purposes" to municipal, agricultural and industrial uses. Yet after more than 10 years the act has resulted in a loss of water supply reliability and has many other sections which warrant review. To that end, Congressman Nunes has acknowledged the failings of CVPIA and has introduced the Central Valley Project Reform Act of 2005 (CVPRA). According to Nunes, "Even the staunchest supporters of CVPIA recognize that it has failed on a number of counts. This bill corrects those problems and makes sure our precious water resources are managed efficiently and the program is accountable to achieve its goals."

The 2005 CVPRA provides many needed reforms to address the shortcomings of the original act that have become apparent after ten years. The legislation would also prohibit release of water from Friant Dam for purposes other than flood control or to meet contractual obligations. The VWA congratulates Congressman Nunes for his efforts to correct the deficiencies contained within the CVPIA and looks forward to working with Congressman Nunes on this important bill.

Feinstein and Radanovich Commended for Efforts to Find Common Ground

The Alliance recently issued a press release in October acknowledging the efforts of Senator Dianne Feinstein and Congressman George Radanovich to find consensus in the long-running dispute between Friant Water Users Authority (FWUA) and the Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC). The litigation focusing on restoring portions of the San Joaquin River with water from Friant Dam is at the heart of the dispute.

VWA secretary/treasurer Dale Brogan stated in the release, "We applaud the leadership of Senator Feinstein and Congressman Radanovich, as well as the entire Central Valley Congressional delegation, for recognizing the importance of the issue to the region. It is only through the collective efforts of our local, state, and federal representatives that consensus can be reached, allowing our communities to move forward with a secure and reliable water supply, benefiting all of our business, municipal, agriculture and resource interests. Those within the Friant water community have attempted to work with the NRDC to reach consensus about how we can re-water the San Joaquin River while insuring a reliable and affordable water supply for our region now and in the future to no avail. We hope the efforts of Senator Feinstein and Congressman Radanovich will reach a different conclusion."

The radical shifts in water supply currently advocated by the NRDC would dramatically impact the economy of the Central Valley. Restoration of a fishery on the San Joaquin River is an admirable goal, but it cannot be accomplished by taking water from the people that live and work in our communities. The Alliance looks forward to participating in the discussions led by Senator Feinstein and Congressman Radanovich and appreciate their commitment to bringing everyone to the table to find a viable resolution to the conflict at hand. They know the region and they know the issue, if anyone can get the job done they will.

Mayor Ed Murray and Dale Brogan Return from DC Lobbying Trip

Valley Water Alliance board members, Mayor Ed Murray of Lindsay and Dale Brogan made a successful trip to Washington, DC in September to lobby members of the 109th Congress. The duo addressed information concerning the need to find a solution to the dispute over the restoration of the San Joaquin River and bring water supply

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reliability to the region. A significant portion of the trip was spent advocating for support of Senator Feinstein and Representative Radanovich's efforts to bring Friant and NRDC interests to the table together to find a viable solution to river restoration, which takes the social, cultural and economic impacts of any water losses into consideration.

Brogan and Murray found the members of the Central Valley delegation and members of the California delegation outside of the valley receptive to the Feinstein/Radanovich proposal. Members felt a negotiated compromise would be beneficial for all parties and the long-term health of the region and the state. The VWA will continue to plan trips to DC to advocate for viable river restoration efforts, which take all interests into account. The next trip will be scheduled in the coming months and several more trips will be planned for the coming year.

Draft Restoration Strategies Report Becomes Public Document

A draft Restoration Strategies Report developed jointly by the Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC) and Friant Water Users Authority has finally been made public despite attempts by environmental interests to delay its release. The report outlines the difficulties inherent in restoring the San Joaquin River to a naturally reproducing salmon fishery as demanded by a coalition of environmental groups led by NRDC. The conceptual document illustrates the need for more detailed studies to determine what amount of river restoration is realistic and achievable.

As part of a process to settle the 1988 lawsuit concerning the San Joaquin River, joint studies were conducted by Friant and NRDC to investigate restoration of the river to support a naturally reproducing salmon fishery and related water supply possibilities. Repeated attempts to make the Restoration Strategies Report public were resisted by NRDC. The report, completed in 2003, became public when Friant submitted the report to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation due to a notice of termination of grant funds for continued river restoration studies issued by DWR.

The report highlights the significant improvements needed for restoration, beyond the enormous amount of water required for salmon restoration on the San Joaquin River. The report makes several other critical findings relating to river restoration including:

1. Creation of a naturally reproducing salmon fishery would require much of the water currently used by communities within the Central San Joaquin Valley.
2. Despite all of the studies completed, it is still unknown just how much water would actually be needed to restore a salmon fishery on the San Joaquin River.
3. Re-creating the river environment for a salmon fishery would be difficult at best and would cost hundreds of millions of dollars.
4. The study did not assess whether there would be enough cold water in the river at all times to sustain a salmon fishery, which is a critical requirement.

The report estimated the cost of the physical improvements to the river channel alone would exceed \$650 million. Additionally, the report estimated a naturally reproducing salmon fishery would require from 385,000 acre feet to 1.8 million acre-feet of water. However, the annual firm water supply contract for Friant water users is only 800,000 acre-feet. Staggering numbers such as these would have a detrimental impact to our regional economy as well as social and cultural impacts. The need for continued research to apply accurate conclusions to the reports findings is necessary. Funding for continued research into the requirements for realistic river restoration has been stalled by DWR.

The release of the draft Restoration Strategies Report provides critical information for all stakeholders and decision-makers so meaningful river restoration discussions based on reality can be conducted. Necessary research if a river restoration plan based on sound science that does not detrimentally impact the social, cultural and economic well being of the Central Valley is going to be developed.

If you are interested in learning more about the Restoration Strategies report we encourage you to go to www.valleywateralliance.org and download our white paper about the issue.

WWW.VALLEYWATERALLIANCE.ORG

If you haven't done so yet, don't forget to check out the Valley Water Alliance website.

Please contact the Valley Water Alliance at info@valleywateralliance.org if you would like a presentation about VWA or need additional information. To be placed on the Alliance's mailing list, or to provide edits or submissions for our monthly newsletter please contact Alfreda Sebasto at info@valleywateralliance.org or call 559-291-0184.



Our Water, Our Future.