



Issue Alert!

Contact your U.S. Senators - Urge them to vote "Yes" on WIIN Act

December 6, 2016

The House and Senate yesterday jointly released a compromise bill on comprehensive water resources infrastructure legislation that includes the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA – S.2848/H.R. 5303). The resulting bill, the “Water Infrastructure Improvements Act for the Nation Act” (WIIN Act, [S. 612 text](#) and [summary](#)), includes the WRDA, provisions to help communities meet safe drinking water standards, authorizes state regulation of coal ash, addresses several tribal and natural resources issues, and also contains provisions to address California drought issues.

The resulting water resources bill provides drought relief for California and the West. It expedites water storage and delivery, and alternative water supply programs in the West to help drought-stricken communities.

California drought language has been negotiated between Senator Feinstein (D-CALIFORNIA), House Majority Leader McCarthy (R-CALIFORNIA) and other California Republicans. It provides regulatory flexibility to capture more water in existing reservoirs during the wet months in California while not changing the Endangered Species Act. It would also produce water supply benefits for Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project contractors; protect the rights and interests of water users upstream of the Delta; and avoid the catastrophic CVP operations of 2016. This language is supported by numerous California water agencies, many of whom are Family Farm Alliance members.

For Western areas where the Corps of Engineers plays a role in water infrastructure, the WRDA component of the compromise bill authorizes studies for future water resources improvements and makes modifications to previous authorizations. It empowers non-federal participation in construction and operation and maintenance activities. It accelerates and broadens reforms for infrastructure project permit processing, and cuts red tape by requiring timely approvals for non-federal modifications to Corps of Engineers projects to help maximize water supplies in drought years.

Despite the broad benefits provided by this legislation, the California drought provisions are already strongly opposed by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CALIFORNIA), the ranking member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, who called the drought provisions an “outrageous poison pill”, and vowed to use every tool at her disposal to stop it. As reported in today’s *Sacramento Bee*, Senator Boxer, along with the Natural Resources Defense Council, Earthjustice and certain other environmental activist groups, claim that the measure would roll back the Endangered Species Act, risking drinking water and fishing jobs in California by shifting water from the environment to “large-scale corporate agriculture”.

The latest news is that the Senate plan is to hold a cloture vote on the water resources bill Friday, but the vote could happen Thursday if the chamber agrees to bypass procedural vote.

What you can do to help: immediately contact your U.S. Senators and urge that they support the “Water Infrastructure Improvements Act for the Nation Act”. Contrary to what critics say, **the California provisions of this legislation do not amend the Endangered Species Act, nor do they override protections in the existing biological opinions.** Also – as evidenced by the support shown by Metropolitan Water District of Southern California – these provisions benefit millions of urban water users, as well as Central Valley farmers and ranchers. **Please contact your Senators and urge that they support the WIIN Act.**

The Family Farm Alliance is a grassroots organization of family farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts and allied industries in 17 Western states. The Alliance is focused on one mission: To ensure the availability of reliable, affordable irrigation water supplies to Western farmers and ranchers. In the past decade, the Family Farm Alliance has been invited to testify nearly 50 times before Congress on water and environmental challenges and legislation.

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