

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 28, 2021

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Chairman
Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cliff Bentz
Ranking Member
Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Westerman, Chairman Huffman, and Ranking Member Bentz:

We write to bring your attention to a troubling development in the litigation surrounding the long-term operations of California's water system and request an oversight hearing as soon as possible.

As you are likely aware, the Department of the Interior and Department of Commerce recently filed a proposed interim operations plan for the Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP) in the consolidated litigation challenging the 2019 biological opinions for long-term operations of the CVP and SWP and the 2020 Record of Decision on Reinitiation of Consultation on the Coordinated Long-Term Modified Operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project.

We are concerned that there have not been adequate, or any, analyses completed throughout the drafting of the interim operations plan. It is also our understanding there has not been a sufficient amount of consultation with public water agencies and affected stakeholders during this process. As noted in several congressional letters sent to the administration on the subject, both the environmental plaintiffs and the water agency defendant-intervenors expressed serious concerns with the effects of such a plan and its compliance with relevant federal laws.

Although we are pleased that the judge presiding over the case expressed similar skepticism that this plan would be sufficient to resolve the litigation, it seems that the federal agencies rushed this plan without conducting an environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act or a robust assessment of impacts on threatened and endangered species. These actions affect millions of people and more than two-million acres of farmland and wildlife in California. While we recognize that navigating the drought is extremely challenging, decisions with such broad impacts should be informed by the best available science, comply with the relevant federal statutes, and be subject to a collaborative and robust public process. We believe that congressional oversight is warranted in this situation to ensure that how the federal agencies approached the interim operations plan does not set a precedent for resolving this litigation or managing California's water supply.

We respectfully request an oversight hearing on the decision making that informed the proposed interim operations plan and the departments' plans for collaboration with all stakeholders in future plans that would impact project operations.

Sincerely,



David G. Valadao
Member of Congress



Ken Calvert
Member of Congress



Darrell Issa
Member of Congress



Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



Kevin McCarthy
House Republican Leader



Mike Garcia
Member of Congress



Young Kim
Member of Congress



Tom McClintock
Member of Congress

Devin Nunes

Devin Nunes
Member of Congress

Jay Oberholte

Jay Oberholte
Member of Congress

Michelle Steel

Michelle Steel
Member of Congress