

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 13, 2009

Ms. Dorothy R. Rice
Executive Director
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Ms. Rice,

We are writing to request that the State Water Resources Control Board grant the joint petition filed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and the State Department of Water Resources (DWR) which seeks temporary urgency relief to modify water quality standards in order to address severe drought conditions faced by the state of California. We would also ask that this request be submitted into the Board's official record.

As you are fully aware, California is experiencing its third straight drought year, setting the stage for what experts believe may be the worst drought in California's modern history. We request the State Board immediately approve the urgency petition filed by USBR and DWR in order to blunt the impact of this crisis and provide greater flexibility for these agencies in their operation of the Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP). Specifically, the joint petition requests modification of the Delta Outflow, or "X2" criteria, and the San Joaquin River flow requirement at Vernalis.

California is facing a crisis of epic proportions. Available supplies of water have been substantially diminished over the past several years and reservoirs are at dangerously low levels. DWR is expected to reduce its water supply allocations to ten percent or less, and USBR is expected to provide no Central Valley Project water to South-of-Delta agricultural service contractors. Zero and near zero allocations are unprecedented in the history of the state and federal projects, and will cripple communities that rely upon project water deliveries. West-side agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley will be especially hard hit and large metropolitan areas in the South Bay Area and in Southern California will suffer as well. Water is the lifeblood of California and without the Board's swift action, the state's already severely weakened economy will be further negatively impacted.

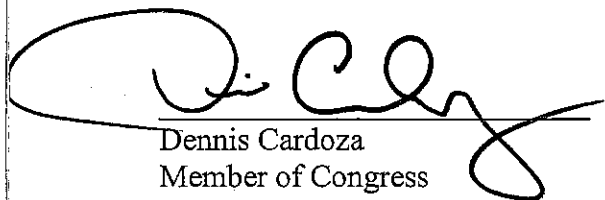
Modification of the X2 and San Joaquin River flow requirements will allow state and federal agencies the flexibility to operate the projects in such a way as to better manage our state's finite water supplies. It will additionally serve to protect salmon populations and prevent further challenges to attaining water quality standards later in the year and perhaps next year as well.

Without modification of the X2 standard, the CVP and SWP would be forced to significantly increase releases from upstream reservoirs to meet Delta outflow levels. These outflow requirements would jeopardize the ability to maintain cold-water reserves to protect salmon and other cold-water fish species and could even result in a loss of control over salinity encroachment in the Delta by late 2009 and into 2010. Moreover, we are informed that because of the current distribution of Delta smelt, allowing the CVP and SWP to operate to maintain a Collinsville outflow standard of 7,100 cubic feet per second will provide adequate protection for Delta smelt. Modification of the San Joaquin River flow requirement at Vernalis would allow USBR and DWR to minimize required releases from upstream reservoirs to preserve cold water needed for salmon habitat as well as water supplies necessary for drought relief.

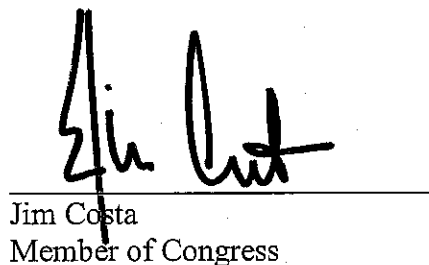
We urge the Board to expeditiously review and approve the DWR and USBR's joint petition in order to provide these agencies the flexibility they need to operate the SWP and CVP during the drought emergency.

Thank you for your timely consideration of our request.

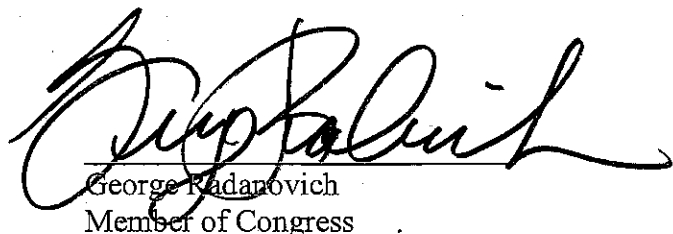
Sincerely,



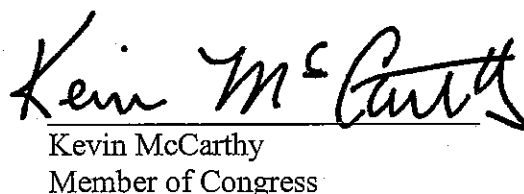
Dennis Cardoza
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



George Radanovich
Member of Congress



Kevin McCarthy
Member of Congress

Cc:

Ken Salazar, Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior
Mike Chrisman, Secretary, California Resources Agency
Lester Snow, Director, California Department of Water Resources