

Mayor
Lois Wynne
Mayor Pro Tem
Jeff Chedester
Council Members
Eddie Neal
Ray Madrigal
William Siegel



**Office of the
City Manager**

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Staff Report

ITEM 2-5

To: Lemoore City Council
From: Andi Welsh, City Manager
Date: July 28, 2015 **Meeting Date:** August 4, 2015
Subject: Western Drought Act Letter of Support

Discussion:

Congressman Valadao's office is requesting a letter of support for House Resolution (H.R.) 2898, the *Western Water and American Food Security Act of 2015*.

H.R. 2898, if passed as drafted, would reform water policies in California, and throughout the western United States so that federal and state agencies must consider the water needs of communities and use the most accurate science when making regulatory decisions. Additionally, the bill provides methods to expand water infrastructure so that it captures more water while enabling greater movement and storage of water and prepares this region for future droughts.

Budget Impact:

None noted.

Recommendation:

That the City Council, by motion, approve a letter of support for H.R. 2898 and authorize the Mayor to sign on behalf of the City.

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July 30, 2015

David G. Valadao
Member of Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Valadao,

California's Central Valley, which provides the majority of fruits and vegetables for the country, has been suffering from a drought, which has only been made worse by federal regulations. As a result, over 300 billion gallons of water have been diverted away from the region in an effort to protect the Delta Smelt. Today, citizens and farmers in the Central Valley are receiving less water, if any at all, than they previously contracted for and purchased. The water system that established California as a beacon of ingenuity has been pushed to the wayside for a bait fish and has had devastating consequences for farmers, as they now fallow thousands of acres of farmland. Cities in the Central Valley have run dry, relying solely on trucks to deliver potable water.

For years, you have fought to bring water back to the valley; this year is no different. We support your introduction of H.R. 2898, *Western Water and American Food Security Act of 2015*. This bill would ensure reliable water deliveries for our valley, secure private property and senior water rights, and save millions of dollars by ending wasteful protectionist plans. The bill also requires regulators to substantiate claims with scientific evidence. To ensure water reliability in the future, the bill obligates the federal government to complete feasibility studies for multiple water storage projects in California and increases the scope of investigation for dam safety throughout the West, including expansion.

Something must be done in response to the drought crisis and we are hopeful this legislation is the first step to addressing the water supply challenges we face. We look forward to working with you on advancing H.R. 2898, the Western Drought Act of 2015.

Sincerely yours,

Lois Wynne
Mayor



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.

