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## **Highlights of State of California's Testimony at Fresno Congressional Hearing on Drought**

*FRESNO, Calif.* – Undersecretary of the California Natural Resources Agency Janelle Beland delivered testimony today before the House Committee on Natural Resources at a field hearing in Fresno on the drought and its impacts in California. The following are highlights from Beland's testimony (full submitted testimony attached):

### **Conditions**

California is experiencing a severe drought. On the heels of two previous dry years, all of the state's major reservoirs remain well below average storage for the date. Statewide, the water content of the Sierra snowpack also is well below average for the date. Recent storms have not ended the drought, and the window for California to gain significant precipitation is closing.

### **Water Project Operations/Storm Capture**

State and federal water project operators and environmental and water quality regulators are working together in real time to exercise as much flexibility as possible under regulatory standards to allow for the capture and storage of water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta). Every effort has been made to maximize the amount of water the projects could export during the storms in February and March, with the realization that this may be the last opportunity to capture and store unregulated flow during this winter season.

### **Water Project Operations/Ongoing Operations and Keeping Salt Water out of Delta**

In order to help preserve water supplies in upstream reservoirs and limit salinity encroachment in the Delta, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) is developing plans to install temporary emergency rock barriers across three Delta channels.

### **Water Project Operations/Need to Conserve for 2015**

To maximize flexibility, DWR and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) have coordinated to exercise maximum flexibility and allow the water projects to conserve water as they continue to assess the water needs into 2015. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have also coordinated closely and worked to ensure that water management decisions do minimal harm to endangered and protected species. One primary concern has been to ensure that enough water can be directed to communities for basic needs such as drinking water and water for sanitation and firefighting. Another concern is being able to prevent saltwater intrusion into the interior Delta where a large portion of the state's freshwater supplies are conveyed for human and agricultural use. A certain amount of flow must continue throughout dry months to push back saltwater from the interior Delta.

### **State and Federal Assistance for Agriculture**

State officials are working closely with federal agencies to provide assistance to farmers, ranchers and farmworkers in the most impacted communities. The California Department of Food and Agriculture has launched [www.cdffa.ca.gov/drought](http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/drought) a website that provides updates on the drought and connects farmers to helpful programs.

### **Steps for the Future**

We are taking proactive, long-term steps to prepare California for future droughts and floods. The California Water Action Plan will guide California's efforts to enhance water supply reliability, restore damaged and destroyed ecosystems, and improve the resilience of our infrastructure. We are working daily to balance needs and interests throughout the state on the overall long term sustainability of our water resources. This plan centers on sustaining supplies of water for people, the environment, industry and agriculture. See the final plan [here](#).

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