

From: Duran, Gil (Feinstein) [mailto:Gil_Duran@feinstein.senate.gov]
Sent: Thursday, February 11, 2010 3:44 PM
To: Doyle, Mike
Subject: statement on water

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Thursday, February 11, 2010

Contact: Gil Durán or
Phil LaVelle
(202) 224-9629

**Feinstein Statement on Potential Emergency Move to
Provide More Water to Farmers, Avert Further
Economic Catastrophe in San Joaquin Valley**

“The San Joaquin Valley is experiencing an unprecedented economic crisis - a situation so grave it was termed 'catastrophic' by a federal judge.

The unemployment rate is 40 percent in some Valley towns, and people are standing in bread lines. I believe we need a fair compromise that will respect the Endangered Species Act while recognizing the fact that people in California's breadbasket face complete economic ruin without help.

Therefore, I am working to develop an Emergency Temporary Water Supply amendment that will simply allow San Joaquin Valley farmers to plant, hire and harvest for two years by giving them between 38-40 percent of their water allocation totals in a normal water year.

Due to above-average precipitation in recent weeks, the snowpack in the Northern Sierra is 130 percent of the normal level and the water content is 123 percent of the normal level. Yet water has been gushing past the canals and into the oceans while farms on the West Side of the Valley are likely to receive a very low percentage of their water allocations for a second year because that water cannot be pumped and stored.

Over the last few years, 400,000 acres of farmland have been fallowed, permanent crops uprooted, and tens of thousands of people are unemployed. The situation is untenable.

There is precedent for the solution I am pursuing: in 2003, Congress unanimously approved legislation that provided water supply certainty with regard to restrictions imposed to protect the Silvery Minnow in New Mexico.

In that legislation, Congress mandated that a Biological Opinion be implemented with a change. I am looking to provide similar protections here. I am open to alternative ways to provide a 38-40% normal year water supply to farmers, and there is no final draft of the legislation at this time.”

###