

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**CALIFORNIA WATER COMMISSION**

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December 30, 2013

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State Capitol, Room 205

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The California Water Commission recently convened a panel of public agencies, stakeholders, and conservation organizations to discuss the progress and challenges of the San Joaquin River Restoration Program, one of the largest and most important river restoration projects in the nation. The goal of this program is to restore and maintain fish populations in “good

condition” in the main stem of the San Joaquin River below Friant Dam to the confluence of the Merced River, including naturally-reproducing and self-sustaining populations of salmon and other fish. This program is the result of a historic 2006 settlement of an 18 year old lawsuit over the condition of the San Joaquin River and its native fish population.

Progress has been made on this program but the participants underscored the unprecedented challenges of the effort and urged the Commission to work with other state, federal, local, and other agencies to continue to support the important actions and projects necessary to the program’s long term success.

While legislation authorizing Federal agencies to fund and implement the program was passed by Congress in 2009, securing the necessary federal funding for planning, design, and implementation activities has been challenging given current budget conditions. For the state’s part, the 2006 Memorandum of Understanding signed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the State of California affirmed the state’s intent to assist the settling parties and work collaboratively to restore the river. The Department of Water Resources, for example, has used bond funds for projects related to flood protection and the Department of Fish and Wildlife has provided vital technical assistance for facilities to provide fish passage, reintroduction and monitoring fish, and riparian habitat. The current version of the proposed water bond measure on the November 2014 would provide additional state funding to restore flows and other actions specified in the court settlement.

The Commission believes that continued State participation in and support for the San Joaquin River Restoration Program is essential to the success of this program. Earlier this year, the Legislature approved \$8.8 million for FY 2013-14 and \$2.2 million for FY 2014-15 to support these activities and, as future requests come forward, we hope the Legislature will carefully consider additional proposals directed at meeting the program’s short-term objectives, including projects to support the reintroduction of Chinook salmon and to restore river channels to convey river restoration flows, as part of the State’s overall support for the longer-term vision to restore flows and fisheries in the main stem of the San Joaquin River below Friant Dam.

Honorable Darrell Steinberg, et al.

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The San Joaquin River Restoration Program is a balanced approach to preserving water management and flood control operations, improving water quality, restoring ecosystems, species and habitat and protecting other public trust resources, maintaining agricultural economy, and ensuring a healthy river for our communities and people to enjoy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph Byrne", is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Joseph Byrne
Chairman, California Water Commission