



Senators Feinstein and Boxer Introduce Historic Legislation to Implement Settlement to Restore the San Joaquin River

- Legislation would end 18 years of litigation over the San Joaquin River -

December 6, 2006

Washington, DC – U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer (both D-Calif.) today introduced legislation that would implement a settlement to restore the San Joaquin River and reintroduce the California Central Valley Spring Run Chinook Salmon to the river.

“This legislation would end 18 years of litigation over the fate of the San Joaquin River, and chart a balanced way forward for the restoration and the farmers,” Senator Feinstein said. **“Unless it is approved, the court will find a much more volatile and uncertain remedy. This is why the legislation has such broad support. It is imperative that this legislation go forward.”**

“The benefits are clear. It would transform the San Joaquin into a living river and ensure that the hard-working men and women in the Friant service area continue to have a stable water supply. The alternative: more lawsuits, more fighting, and more uncertainty. An outcome imposed by a judge is likely to be worse for everyone: more costly, riskier for the farmers, and less beneficial for the environment.”

Senator Boxer said, **“This legislation is an important milestone in the efforts to restore the San Joaquin River. Now, we must all work together to see that it passes and is implemented.”**

The legislation was the product of days of negotiations led by Senator Feinstein to resolve differences in the draft legislation in September.

In the end, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Friant Water Users Authority, the State of California, and all of the third parties present in the negotiations agreed to support the settlement and the legislation, and they pledged to do what’s necessary to see that it is approved by Congress.

The legislation indicates how the settlement agreement forged by the parties is going to be implemented. It involves the Department of the Interior, the Department of Commerce, and

the Bureau of Reclamation, and essentially gives the Secretary of the Interior the additional authority to:

- Take the actions to restore the San Joaquin River;
- Reintroduce the California Central Valley Spring Run Chinook Salmon;
- Minimize water supply impacts on Friant water users; and
- Avoid reductions in water supply for third-party water contractors.

The San Joaquin River historically supported large salmon populations, but since the late 1940's, approximately 60 miles of the river have been dried up in most years. This settlement will reverse that.

The legislation gives all sides certainty on how the river will be restored and water will be used.

- The Natural Resources Defense Council will be able to see that the San Joaquin River is restored, without further litigation.
- The Friant Water Users Authority will know that its water supply will remain at manageable levels.
- Third party water contractors will be able to avoid all but the smallest water impacts as a result of the settlement, except on a voluntary basis.
- And the Department of the Interior and the State of California now have partners in efforts to restore the river, improve water supply, and protect the threatened species.

Those present at the negotiations were Senator Barbara Boxer, Representatives George Radanovich, Richard Pombo, Dennis Cardoza, Jim Costa, and Devin Nunes, representatives of the State of California and Federal Government, Friant Water Users Authority, the Natural Resources Defense Council, as well as numerous third party water contractors from the Central Valley.

The San Joaquin River Settlement was filed with the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of California earlier this year. This Settlement requires federal implementing legislation to become fully effective.

Companion legislation was introduced in the House today by Representatives George Radanovich, Dennis Cardoza, Jim Costa, George Miller, Richard Pombo, and Grace Napolitano.

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