



Agreement Reached on Legislation to Implement Settlement to Restore the San Joaquin River

September 27, 2006

Washington, DC – A landmark agreement was reached today on 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, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) announced.

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

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

The following is Senator Feinstein's statement:

"I'm very pleased to announce that we were able to come to agreement on this legislation. It is a key step in the process to restore the San Joaquin, the second largest river in California.

I am hopeful that today's agreement will help transform the San Joaquin into a living river and ensure that the hard-working men and women in the Friant service area will continue to have a stable water supply.

The legislation indicates how the settlement agreement forged by the parties is going to be implemented. It involves the Department of Interior, the Department of Commerce, and the Bureau of Reclamation, and essentially gives the Secretary of 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 parties bridged the gap for one simple reason: it 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 State of California now has partners in efforts to restore the river, improve water supply, and protect the threatened species.

These were tough negotiations, which lasted over 100 hours.

The negotiations included 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 fact that five members of the House of Representatives participated on a bipartisan basis in these negotiations is extraordinarily important. It indicates how critical this issue is to the entire Central Valley.

The negotiations often went late into the evening. But each side came together in good faith and compromised on a number of key issues.

And in the end, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Friant Water Users Authority, the State of California, and all of the third parties have 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 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.

I believe the parties involved in these negotiations came up with a workable solution.

Water is one of the most precious of California's resources and the only way we can continue to prosper as a State is to work for solutions that improve our water supply, restore our environment and our water quality, and protect us from floods.

My great thanks go to all the parties, but especially the members of Congress, who spent so much time hammering out the details of the legislation. This agreement would not have been reached without their involvement and support.”

###