# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 9, 2026

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

We write to request your attention and immediate action to reverse an ill-timed decision that will inevitably result in the potential loss of 600,000 acre-feet of water just in the next month, when water should be used to support farms, communities, and fisheries.

The history and variability of California's hydrology is not a mystery. Persistent drought cycles are followed by severe flood events and time of abundance. More than a century of Department of Water Resources (DWR) hydrologic and reservoir inflow data has confirmed those facts. A single-year can have periods of substantial precipitation and snowfall, and also periods of substantial high-temperatures and dry conditions. This is exactly the "weather whiplash" scenario we face today: a wet late December and early January, followed immediately by persistent dry conditions and critically low snowpack (currently at only 56% of normal for this date and 36% of the April 1st average). Visionary state and federal leaders recognized these challenges and took bold action to harness this water supply potential a century ago by investing in dams, canals, pumpstations and other features that make up the State Water Project (SWP) and the Central Valley Project (CVP). For decades, this extensive, yet simple system worked as it was envisioned, pumping and storing water in the wet season for usage during the demand season for irrigators, and year-round usage for cities and municipalities. In recent decades, layers of regulations, compounded by lawsuits, have severely diminished the projects' ability to perform their most basic, yet critical function.

There are three primary reasons why water shortages exist in California: (1) a lack of precipitation and snowpack, (2) the need for improved water storage and conveyance, and (3) fixed and outdated regulations that lead to water being used in ways that do not maximize beneficial uses for humans and the environment.

We write today to address a circumstance that will negatively impact California's people and fisheries alike. We've been made aware that operations of the CVP and SWP have recently been modified by increasing reservoir releases and decreasing Delta exports as a result of a standard, called Port Chicago, adopted by the State Water Resources Control Board through Water Rights Decision 1641 (D-1641) in December 1999 and revised in 2000. This standard, expected to be in place for 26 days in February and potentially into March, was originally adopted with the intent of supporting the Delta food web, and the concept it was intended to address predates the clam invasion from the late 1980's, which substantially changed the food-

web dynamics in the Delta. The past few decades of scientific research and development have changed the scientific understanding of food web dynamics to be more connected with tributary inflow, rather than Delta outflow. Importantly, reservoir storage releases and export reductions are the two operational measures that can be taken to improve Delta outflow, as the outdated Port Chicago standard requires, but the scientific correlation with food web improvements is no longer valid, largely as a result of a changed ecosystem resulting from clam infestation.

The loss of up to 600,000 acre-feet of water supply for California's agricultural industry and communities is too much to bear. After celebrating the recent declaration that California has finally emerged from 20+ years of drought conditions, this action has the potential to plunge the state back into a regulatory drought, which defies commons sense. Equally importantly, reservoir releases made today to implement the Port Chicago standard are likely to negatively impact the amount of cold water available to support temperature management for salmonids, an important measure for supporting salmonid populations.

The potential loss of 600,000 acre-feet of water as a result of a nearly 30-year-old regulation - intended to address in-Delta conditions that no longer exist due to a clam infestation - particularly given its potential impact on cold-water availability for salmonids and the dry conditions in the current forecast, is simply unconscionable. Given these realities and in light of direction in EO N-16-25, we urge your agencies to analyze the efficacy of this action and to use all available tools to modernize operations of California's water system to protect water supply for its people and its fisheries.

Cc: Wade Crowfoot
Yana Garcia
E. Joaquin Esquivel
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Sincerely,

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

David G. Valadao
Member of Congress

Adam Gray
Member of Congress

Vince Fong
Member of Congress