

California drought catalyst for federal action

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) claims diminished precipitation levels over the past three years could be the worst in California's one-hundred-year recorded history. The drought has prompted legislative action from federal sources.

On February 5, the U.S. House passed (229-191) the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley Emergency Water Delivery Act (H.R. 3964) that aims to overturn the San Joaquin River restoration in favor of delivering more water to the agriculture industry by lengthening irrigation contracts. The Obama Administration announced plans to veto the bill in the unlikely case that H.R. 3964 passes in the Senate.

Democrats have since introduced California Emergency Drought Relief Act of 2014 (H.R. 4039) and S. 2016 as counter bills, which provide \$300 million in emergency funding for conservation projects while enhancing the San Joaquin restoration.

The Obama Administration is now working with CA groups to mitigate emergency water shortages, allocating \$115 million for farmers and ranchers and \$68 million for affected communities. The Presidential office stated in the same press release that their 2015 budget request will include \$1 billion climate resiliency fund for research, community preparation, and funding better technology and infrastructure.

Sources: E&E News; U.S. Drought Monitor; NOAA; California Dept. of Water Resources; Government Printing Office; CBS News; White House Press Office
