

## House passes California drought relief bill despite Administration veto threat

July 16, 2015

On July 16, the House passed the Western Waters and American Food Security Act of 2015 (H.R. 2898), largely along party lines. The bill addresses drought by laying the groundwork for new water storage projects in California and loosens environmental restrictions in the state, a measure that has received staunch opposition from House Democrats and the President. Rep. David Valadao (R-CA) introduced H.R. 2898, which mirrors an effort in the Senate headed by Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA).

The bill received some support from California Democrats, but did not receive general support from Democrats because of environmental concerns. The bill would end the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement Act, which protects its namesake river and the salmon that spawn in its waters. The bill would also require the Bureau of Reclamation to study the environmental effects of loosening environmental regulations which would then pave the way for more water projects.

Despite a veto threat from the President, Senator Feinstein expressed confidence that the House and Senate will be able to convene a conference and put together a bill that will pass. However, Sen. Feinstein said that she believes the relief should come through reforms in water pumping and transfers and not at the expense of environmental standards.

Sources: E&E News, House Natural Resources Committee

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