



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 19, 2014

THE GOVERNOR'S DROUGHT DECLARATION

"We live in an overreacting world"

"For every action, there is an unequal and opposite overreaction"

AquAlliance
Butte Environmental Council
California Coastkeeper Alliance
California Save Our Streams Council
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance
California Striped Bass Association
California Water Impact Network
Clean Water Action
Citizens Water Watch
Desal Response Group
Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Environmental Protection Information Center
Earth Law Center
Fish Sniffer Magazine
Foothill Conservancy
Friends of the River
Food & Water Watch
Granite Bay Flycasters
Institute for Fisheries Resources
The Karuk Tribe
North Coast Environmental Center
Northern California Council, Federation of Fly Fishers
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
Planning & Conservation League
Restore the Delta
Sacramento River Preservation Trust
Save the Bay Association
Sierra Club California
Sierra Nevada Alliance
Southern California Watershed Alliance
Winnemem Wintu Tribe

While the Environmental Water Caucus applauds the emphasis on conservation found in Governor Brown's 20-point drought proclamation, we fear that the time worn clichés quoted above have relevance here. Buried in those 20 points are a few proverbial "wolves in sheep's clothing".

Directive 4 orders State agencies to "expedite" processing of water transfers. The danger in hurried water transfers is the risk of serious environmental damage on the seller's end, such as replacing the transferred surface water with groundwater from an already badly stressed aquifer. Only careful advance environmental review can prevent that type of unintended consequence.

Directive 5 sounds innocent enough in ordering the State Board to allow consolidation of the places of use of waters of the State Water Project and the Central Valley Project. SWP is supposed to serve urban Southern California and parts of Kern County. CVP is supposed to serve specified areas, mostly agriculture, in the San Joaquin Valley. In fact, Directive 5 would allow unimagined unintended consequences like allowing CVP water to be sent to Orange County to float the boats in Disneyland's Pirates of the Caribbean ride.

Directive 8 broadly expands the State Board's ability to modify reservoir releases and water diversion limitations, supposedly to enable water to be conserved for later use. But the loose language would also allow modifications for earlier releases and diversions, which typically are sought by politically powerful economic interests such as the Westlands Water District.

Directive 9 is by far the most egregious example of overreaction, and this time with an intended consequence --- broad suspension of one of Governor Brown's favorite whipping boys, the California Environmental Quality Act. It also suspends Water Code Section 13247, which requires all state entities to comply with water quality plans of the State Board.

Directive 10 should say that safe and adequate drinking water be made available for disadvantaged San Joaquin Valley and other agricultural communities.

"This overreaching and throwing out the baby with the bath water in Directives 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10 is unnecessary when the real emphasis should be on permanent conservation at all levels – households, industry and agriculture" said Nick Di Croce, Facilitator of the Environmental Water Caucus. "The need for more conservation and greater efficiencies in water management should not result in abrogation of equally needed environmental safeguards benefitting both humans and other species, including fish."

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