

Assembly
California Legislature



JIM PATTERSON
ASSEMBLYMAN, TWENTY-THIRD DISTRICT

January 2, 2014

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein,

I am writing to urgently request you take action to avert a situation that will have significant detrimental economic and sociological impacts throughout much of the Southern San Joaquin Valley in 2014.

The San Joaquin River Restoration Program was legislated by Congress and the President in 2006 as the result of the settlement of environmental litigation. The Program has two co-equal goals: (1) Attempt to restore a self-sustaining salmon fishery, and (2) Mitigate or eliminate water losses to those who have used this water for 65 years to establish and support a multi-billion dollar economy and countless rural communities.

The first few years of the Program were intended to allow time to carry out the necessary improvements for the river to carry restoration flows, and did not provide for full water releases because those releases would be useless and a waste of water until the required changes were made.

Under the schedule, full restoration flows are scheduled for 2014. However, due to budgetary, regulatory and other constraints, the required improvements have not been made. Therefore, 2014 releases will result in substantial losses to the historical users without any corresponding restoration benefit. It will be particularly acute if 2014 is another dry year, which it is on track to becoming.

I am not seeking to have the Program or the underlying settlement repealed or modified. I simply ask on behalf of the communities in my District severely impacted by these releases; that full restoration releases be deferred until they can achieve the intended goals in the river. Until then, putting full restoration flows down the river does nothing but deprive farmers and communities of water. While some may argue that the devastating impacts caused by the water losses are counterbalanced by restoration benefits in the river, there can be little debate that these losses are not justified when there are no material restoration benefits because the river is not "ready" for the water.

Again, I respectfully request that the San Joaquin River Restoration Releases for 2014 be deferred until the river improvements necessary to allow the channel to carry these flows have

been completed. Deferral is not an abandonment of the Program, it is merely recognition that the required improvements have not been completed, and that water should always be wisely and beneficially used for the public good and not wasted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Patterson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jim Patterson
Assemblyman, 23rd District