

San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement Act

(H.R. 24 and S. 27: January 2007)

Last year, a historic settlement was reached to restore flows and salmon populations to California's second longest river, the San Joaquin, and approved by the federal court. The agreement resolves 18 years of litigation, and represents a landmark accord between environmental and fishing groups, Central Valley farmers, and the state and federal governments to undertake one of the nation's most significant river restoration projects.

Since construction was completed in 1949, the operation of Friant Dam near Fresno has caused 60 miles of the San Joaquin River to run dry, eliminating miles upon miles of natural habitat and devastating most native fish species. Yet, even today, the River continues to function as one of the main arteries to the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, which supplies more than 23 million Californians with drinking water, sustains the largest estuarine ecosystem on the west coast, and irrigates much of the state's multi-billion dollar agricultural industry.

The settlement will restore continuous flows downstream of Friant Dam and revive the river's fabled salmon runs. The settlement also mitigates water supply impacts and provides certainty to Friant water users. It will have far-reaching benefits for all of California, including improved water quality, enhanced flood protection, healthier wildlife habitat, economic development, and recreational opportunities. It is strongly supported by state and federal officials and already has bipartisan support in Congress.

Fast Facts:

Environmental Restoration: Improvements on the San Joaquin River require Friant Dam to send more fresh water downstream and restore the river to more natural conditions. The settlement calls for numerous channel improvements, as well as facilities to provide for fish passage and minimize fish entrainment. Chinook salmon will be re-introduced to the river no later than December 31, 2012.

Water Management: A key goal of the settlement is to minimize impacts to water users who depend on the San Joaquin River. The settlement is expected to reduce average annual deliveries to water users from Friant Dam by about 15 percent. The settlement makes surplus water available at low cost to these water users. Additional tools will also be developed to reduce or avoid these water supply impacts.

Flood Protection: The settlement calls for the implementation of numerous projects related to flood protection along the river, including levee repairs and improvements, maintenance, levee relocation, and work on channel facilities.

Public Participation: The settlement requires that all federal and state planning and environmental review requirements be followed. These processes will provide numerous opportunities for residents, stakeholders, and interested groups to participate and provide input.

Funding: Funding will be drawn largely from a combination of state bond initiatives and payments made by Friant water users. The state of California has dedicated \$110 million to settlement implementation, and anticipates that another \$90 million will be available over the next few years. The agreement provides for approximately \$440 million from Friant water users for settlement implementation (through extending water user payments known as the "Friant Surcharge" for the life of the settlement, redirection of capital repayments, and authorizing the Secretary of Interior to allocate up to \$2 million per year of additional Friant payments from the CVPIA Restoration Fund). Finally, the agreement authorizes the appropriation of up to \$250 million in new federal funds as a match for non-federal contributions devoted to the effort.

Surface Storage: Some non-parties have suggested that an expensive new dam on the San Joaquin River should be developed above Friant Dam to mitigate for water supply losses under the settlement. The parties oppose any efforts to link new surface storage to the settlement. The settlement does not anticipate or require any additional surface storage facilities on the San Joaquin River or elsewhere.

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