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Release Immediate
May 10, 2013

(The following is a statement by Dan Nelson, Executive Director of the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority.)

WATER LEGISLATION PROVIDES SENSIBLE WAY TO BALANCE FISH, WATER SUPPLY NEEDS

"The major legislation introduced today by Congressman Jim Costa creates a sensible way of balancing the protection of fisheries while providing reasonable water supplies for families, farms and disadvantaged rural communities throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

"The legislation maintains core provisions of the fish protections governing water deliveries while providing long-absent reliability for the thousands of farmers, farmworkers and millions of Californians who rely upon a secure delivery of water to create jobs, expand the economy and feed a nation.

"While public water suppliers continue to work with State and federal agencies to develop long-term environmental and water supply solutions for the Delta, meaningful and vital steps must be taken now to protect California's future.

"After 20 years of nearly continuous water shortages driven by federal environmental regulations, our coping strategies are all but exhausted. Our farmers have installed drip irrigation on several hundred thousand acres, have permanently retired a hundred thousand acres from irrigation and annually leave hundreds of thousands of acres unfarmed depending on the severity of the cutbacks. Sadly, the social and economic pain inflicted on our communities has not resulted in any gains for the fisheries as the regulators had hoped.

"We all want to see a healthy Delta ecosystem, but we should all acknowledge the failed approaches in that pursuit. It is time for reasonableness, sensibility and balance."

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