



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES  
OF CALIFORNIA

October 14, 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy & Natural  
Resources  
United States Senate  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy & Natural  
Resources  
United States Senate  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

**RE: H.R. 2898 & S. 1894**

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on H.R. 2898 - the Western Water and American Food Security Act, S. 1894 - the California Emergency Drought Relief Act, and related legislation.

RCRC is an association of thirty-four rural California counties and our Board of Directors is composed of elected Supervisors from each of those member counties. RCRC member counties cover over half of California's total land mass, stretching from the northern border with Oregon to the southeast border with Mexico, from the Central Valley to the Sierras, and from the coast to California's wine country.

As you are aware, with the beginning of a new water year on October 1, California is now in its fifth year of drought and as a result faces a variety of serious challenges, as do other Western states. RCRC urges Congress and the Obama Administration to advance drought legislation to assist California and the other impacted Western states. RCRC respectfully requests your consideration of the following RCRC key priorities:

### **Water Rights**

RCRC supports the State's existing water right and water right priority system. RCRC adopted policy includes direction that *"Water rights established by state law and state laws relating to use of water should be respected by federal agencies."*

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RCRC supports the express recognition of the State's water rights system in federal legislation. To this end, the inclusion of the water rights provisions in both the Senate and House bills are appreciated. Currently Title V in H.R. 2898 is more clear and specific than the language contained in Title I, Subtitle B of S. 1894. Clarity and specificity is highly desirable.

### **New Water Supplies**

Advancing water supply reliability throughout California, especially during times of drought, will require water infrastructure and water storage projects that improve the operation of the State's water system.

RCRC is on record in support of H.R. 1060 (La Malfa and Garamendi) relating to Sites Reservoir, a proposed off-stream water storage project in Northern California that would provide both water supply and environmental benefits. Sites Reservoir would provide much needed flexibility to management of the State's water system, especially during dry periods. RCRC respectfully requests consideration of the inclusion of Sites Reservoir in the storage section of federal drought legislation.

Additionally, RCRC supports the inclusion of financing provisions in federal drought legislation to assist with new and improved water infrastructure throughout California. S. 1894 specifically includes important provisions for federally-backed financing and increased grants for water infrastructure.

### **Integrated Regional Water Management**

Integrated regional water management plays an important role in meeting regional water sustainability and self-sufficiency within hydrologic regions, which in turn helps achieve statewide reliability.

RCRC supports congressional efforts to encourage federal agencies to implement their policies and programs to facilitate regional water sustainability and self-sufficiency through regional and local water management actions that maximize the utilization of water within the region for water supply, water quality and ecosystem purposes. Title IV, Subtitle B of S. 1894 includes important provisions to this end.

In conclusion, RCRC appreciates the opportunity to share with you key issues of importance to RCRC member counties as you seek to address the challenges gripping California and much of the Western states during this historic drought and going forward.

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Please feel free to contact me at (916) 447-4806 or [kmannion@rcrcnet.org](mailto:kmannion@rcrcnet.org) or Thane Young at (202) 638-1950 or [tyoung@vsadc.com](mailto:tyoung@vsadc.com) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



KATHY MANNION  
Legislative Advocate

cc: The Honorable Al Franken, Member of the United States Senate  
The Honorable Martin Heinrich, Member of the United States Senate  
The Honorable Mazie Hirono, Member of the United States Senate  
The Honorable Angus King, Member of the United States Senate  
The Honorable Joe Manchin III, Member of the United States Senate  
The Honorable Bernard Sanders, Member of the United States Senate  
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Member of the United States Senate  
The Honorable Elizabeth Warren, Member of the United States Senate  
The Honorable Ron Wyden, Member of the United States Senate  
The Honorable Barbara Boxer, Member of the United States Senate  
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Member of the United States Senate  
The Honorable David Valadao, Member of the United States House of Representatives  
The Honorable Doug LaMalfa, Member of the United States House of Representatives  
The Honorable John Garamendi, Member of the United States House of Representatives