DEVIN NUNES
21ST DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEES:
HEALTH
TRADE

COMMITTEE ON BUDGET

ASSISTANT REPUBLICAN WHIP

UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

1013 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-2523

113 NORTH CHURCH STREET
SUITE 208
VISALIA, CA 93291
(559) 733-3861

264 CLOVIS AVENUE
SUITE 206
CLOVIS, CA 93612
(559) 323-5235

WWW.NUNES.HOUSE.GOV

February 6, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20502

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor, State of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear President Obama and Governor Schwarzenegger:

The State of California is experiencing a disaster. The economy of the state is dependent on two major water supply projects that were designed and built in middle of the Twentieth Century, the Central Valley Project (CVP) and the State Water Project (SWP). Collectively, these projects serve more than 25 million people in the San Francisco Bay Area and Southern California and serve more than three million acres of highly productive farmland. However, we have failed to invest in the infrastructure required to make these Projects capable of serving the current needs of the state. Moreover, our failure to invest in conveyance infrastructure in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Rivers Delta has subjected the CVP and SWP to severe restrictions under the Endangered Species Act. As a consequence, the people who rely on the CVP and SWP are facing unprecedented water supply shortages at the hands of policymakers.

For the first time in the history of the CVP, which is operated by the Bureau of Reclamation, agricultural water service contractors on the westside of the San Joaquin Valley will receive no water for the irrigation of nearly a million acres of farmland. As a consequence, as much as 500,000 acres will be forced out of production and, according to a recent forecast by economists at the University of California, Davis, more than 40,000 farm workers will lose their jobs. This is a number which exceeds the number of employees of General Motors. Moreover, these job losses will occur in poor, rural communities, such as the City of Mendota, which already has unemployment rates in excess of 40%, and these communities are the least capable of reacting to this economic devastation.

This year the SWP, which is operated by the California Department of Water Resources, will be able to deliver only 5-10% of normal allocations to cities and farms served by the SWP. The economic losses in places like the Los Angeles basin and Silicon Valley, which rely on water from the SWP, will be exponentially greater than losses in the farming communities of the San Joaquin Valley, and the consequences of this water supply disaster will eviscerate any benefits from a stimulus package passed by the Congress.

I am writing to urge you to act immediately to ameliorate the economic disruption that is already occurring in California. There are actions that can be taken. For instance, New Melones

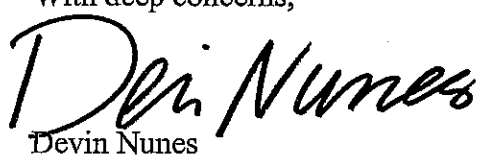
Reservoir, which is owned by the Bureau of Reclamation, currently holds nearly 1.2 million acre-feet of water. Historically, water from this reservoir has been used primarily to enhance fisheries in the Stanislaus River. However, current needs demand that this water be made available to farmers and cities outside of the historic place of use, and it is within the discretion of your agencies to enable this change. In addition, agencies within your respective administrations exercise great discretion in the administration of federal laws, like the Endangered Species Act and the Central Valley Project Improvement Act; or state laws, like the California Water Code. These agencies should be directed to exercise that discretion in a manner that will enable the CVP and the SWP to move water to the farms and cities that depend on these projects. I implore each of you to direct agencies under your control to take all steps necessary to restore water supplies to some sense of normalcy.

Finally, I am asking that you join me in supporting legislation that will prevent environmental laws from impeding progress on stimulus projects and actions required to deal with emergencies like the one currently facing California. Senator David Vitter has proposed an amendment to the stimulus bill that would exempt from the application of the National Environmental Policy Act for a period of three years projects intended to stimulate the economy and exempt from the application of the Endangered Species Act actions taken during periods of a declared emergency to mitigate the impacts of that emergency. I will introduce companion legislation in the House of Representatives at the earliest opportunity. Please support Senator Vitter's proposed amendment and my legislation.

As you know, the San Joaquin Valley is America's breadbasket. Our region supplies food and fiber to the world. Communities in the San Joaquin Valley grew on the foundation of a strong agriculture economy, but today many of those communities are withering because of chronic water supply shortages. I do not believe that I am exaggerating when I state that people in rural areas of the San Joaquin Valley are facing a humanitarian crisis unparalleled in modern history. Moreover, large urban areas of California are about to experience the hardship endured by these rural communities for the last two decades.

While you cannot reverse decades of bad decisions overnight, you do have options before you today. I urge you to exercise leadership and act now to mitigate the suffering of my constituents. **Failure to act will simply push the San Joaquin Valley unemployment rate above 20% and result in the collapse of civil society.**

With deep concerns,



Devin Nunes
Member of Congress

CC: Speaker Nancy Pelosi; Interior Secretary Ken Salazar; California Secretary for Natural Resources Mike Chrisman; Senator Dianne Feinstein; Senator Barbara Boxer