

Senator Dianne Feinstein
Before the
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Water and Power
Statement Supporting Restoration of
Essential Conveyance Act
July 22, 2020

Madam Chairman and Madam Ranking Member, thank you for inviting me to speak in support of the “Restoration of Essential Conveyance Act.”

California’s 40 million people and our leading agricultural industry depend on thousands of miles of major canals to bring them water.

I want to show you how desperately our canals need to be repaired. This first picture shows what has happened as a result of subsidence, where the land has dropped 10, 20 or more feet due to overpumping of groundwater. You can see the result – the walls of the canal are completely collapsing.

The second picture shows even longer cracks, and the entire side of the canal is caving inwards.

The third picture shows another problem caused by this severe subsidence; the bridge over the canal is now barely over the water. The ability of our canals to carry vital water has dropped as well, by as much as 60%.

Madam Chairman, I know you have a bill to restore Reclamation’s deteriorating infrastructure. S. 3811 has similar goals. It would:

- 1) Authorize \$200 million each to repair three essential canals in California, the Friant Kern Canal, the Delta Mendota Canal, and the California Aqueduct; and it would

- 2) Authorize an additional \$200 million for a critical environmental project, the San Joaquin River Restoration Program.

Severe Threat of Drought and Climate Change

I want to put this bill in a larger context affecting Arizona and Nevada and the whole West. As you both well know, we are facing a severe threat of drought, which a changing climate is only going to make worse.

- The journal *Science* has concluded we may be entering a megadrought, and we face a structural water deficit in the Colorado River Basin of approximately 1.2 million to 1.5 million acre-feet per year.
- This water deficit is only going to get much worse over time. The Bureau of Reclamation has projected that the Colorado River Basin's annual water supply deficit will be 3.2 million acre feet by 2060.
- This projected annual deficit is equivalent to the water supply of 16 million people.
- This is a looming crisis, and it is critical that Congress develop bipartisan solutions to address it.

Benefits of This Bill:

The canal restoration bill advances the types of projects that we need to reduce the Colorado Basin's water supply deficit.

These canal restoration projects will provide significant water supply at an affordable cost:

- The three projects together will create an average of 367,000 additional acre feet per year, or enough water for 1.8 million people;
- The new water will cost approximately \$250 to \$300 per acre feet, about one-half to one-fifth the cost of other water supply projects.
- The federal cost-share will be 50% or less with water contractors paying the rest.

The projects are broadly supported and non-controversial. Madam Chairman, I would like to ask that these 25 support letters be placed in the record.

Because these projects are restoring canals damaged by subsidence to their original design capacity, they raise few environmental issues.

Finally, the bill not only improve water supply to adapt to future droughts, but it will also help restore the environment as well. The bill authorizes an additional \$200 million for restoring a salmon run on the San Joaquin River, California's second longest river.

For all these reasons, I urge the Committee to approve the "Restoration of Essential Conveyance Act" and I look forward to working with you both to get it enacted along with other critical water legislation. Thank you.