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**CALIFORNIA'S WATER SUPPLY SLASHED...AGAIN**

***Additional Regulatory Restrictions Cut Water Supply for People, Businesses & Farms***

**Sacramento, CA** – Additional restrictions on the state's water projects in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) were announced today, further reducing the amount of water available to people, businesses and farms throughout California. The California Department of Water Resources has initially forecasted that these restrictions will cut approximately 10 percent in statewide water deliveries (300,000 – 500,000 acre-feet) on average, expected to begin in 2010. These cuts are in addition to the heavy restrictions that were imposed in December 2008 to address the decline of another fish species, the Delta smelt.

“Every time we get hit with new cutbacks, it's like closing another lane on the water supply freeway. Pretty soon, the only way we'll be able to move water will be by helicopter,” said Laura King Moon, assistant general manager of the State Water Contractors. “These are supposed to be reasonable and prudent actions, but we're skeptical they actually adhere to those guidelines.”

The cutbacks were outlined in a biological opinion for Chinook salmon, steelhead and green sturgeon, issued today by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The biological opinion, or permit, sets guidelines for State Water Project and Central Valley Project (CVP) pumping operations out of the Delta. The new biological opinion increases restrictions on water project operations even though the projects are currently limited to taking no more than two percent (2%) of the listed salmon populations in the Delta. Changing ocean conditions have been recently identified by federal fish agencies and scientists as the primary cause of salmon decline, in addition to significant ocean harvests (<http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/media/SalmonDeclineReport.pdf>).

“Public water agencies have faced cutback after cutback in failed attempts to boost fish populations. Project operations are only one potential reason for the fish decline. Strict policies that limit water projects to no more than two percent of the listed salmon populations in the Delta are already enforced,” added Moon.

During the past two years, public water agencies have faced unprecedented water supply cutbacks. This year, approximately 370,000 acre-feet of water - enough to serve nearly three million people for one year - has been cut to satisfy the requirements of the Delta smelt biological opinion. Public water agencies throughout the state have filed lawsuits challenging the opinion. Recently, a federal court ruled in favor of CVP water agencies, ordering the federal fish agencies to comply with environmental

laws and take into account the harm that the water cutbacks have on people. The State Water Contractors' case will be heard in federal court later this year.

“These cuts are crippling on our people and businesses – especially in the Central Valley where farmers are being forced to fallow their land and workers are being laid off,” added Moon. “Rather than piecemeal restrictions, we need to balance the needs of the environment and the needs of people with a collective plan for the Delta.”

There has been no conclusive scientific evidence that water delivery cutbacks from the Delta will benefit the fish species they aim to protect. Invasive plants and aquatic animals are upsetting chemical and biological balances in the Delta, toxic runoff from pesticides and wastewater treatment plant discharges are flowing through Delta waters and nonnative predator fish introduced for sport fishing have altered the natural food web.

At the center of these regulatory restrictions is the failing Delta – a critical estuary and the hub of California's primary water delivery systems. Public water agencies, environmental organizations, and state and federal agencies are working together to develop a long-term solution. The Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP), a comprehensive conservation plan for the Delta, will provide a basis for addressing the many threats to the Delta needed for fishery and ecosystem recovery, while finding a way to continue to deliver water to Californians throughout the state.

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*The State Water Contractors is a statewide, non-profit association of 27 public agencies from Northern, Central and Southern California that purchase water under contract from the California State Water Project. Collectively the State Water Contractors deliver water to more than 25 million residents throughout the state and more than 750,000 acres of agricultural lands. For more information on the State Water Contractors, please visit [www.swc.org](http://www.swc.org).*