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Courtesy of Supervisor Mary Nejedly Piepho, Contra Costa County, District III

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Obama Administration Officials Release Interim Federal Action Plan for Water Crisis in California Bay-Delta

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Obama Administration today released a coordinated interim action plan to address the water crisis in California. In accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by six federal agencies at the end of September, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Chair Nancy Sutley of the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) joined the Department of Commerce, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of the Army and the Department of Agriculture to release a list of actions being taken by the six federal agencies.

“The California water crisis is a full-blown crisis that requires all hands on deck to help those who are suffering. We are moving aggressively to do our part to address the urgent need to provide reliable water supplies for 25 million Californians, while also protecting the Bay-Delta ecosystem upon which the supplies depend,” Secretary Salazar said. “Everything we do will be done in close partnership with the State of California and will build upon the path-breaking legislation recently enacted by the State.”

“The Obama Administration is committed to robust reengagement in restoring the Bay-Delta ecosystem and addressing California’s water needs,” said Nancy Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. “The actions that Federal agencies announce today will have real, on-the-ground impacts in 2010 and will complement the State of California’s ongoing response.”

The coordinated federal action plan will:

- **strengthen the federal government’s coordination of actions with the state** – especially its commitment to more fully engage federal agencies in the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, the most significant effort currently underway to address critical long-term water issues in California.
- **help to meet water needs through actions that promote smarter water supply and use** such as constructing projects that increase flexibility in the water supply system; enhancing water transfers; ensuring that the best science is applied to water supply decisions; and intensifying and aligning Federal water conservation efforts with those of the state.
- **help ensure healthy ecosystems and improved water quality** through independent reviews of key scientific questions,

including a review of all factors that are contributing to the decline of the Bay-Delta ecosystem; investigation and mitigation of other stressors affecting water quality in the Bay-Delta and impacts to its imperiled species; advancing ecosystem restoration projects, including near-term habitat projects in the Bay-Delta; accelerating the restoration and propagation of Delta smelt and other aquatic species; continuing construction of fish screens; and addressing climate change impacts on the Bay-Delta.

• **call for agencies to help deliver drought relief services and ensure integrated flood risk management**, including the prioritization of projects and activities for flood risk management and related levee stabilization projects and navigation.

Deputy Secretary of the Interior David J. Hayes today noted that the federal officials reviewed and considered public comments in preparing this interim plan. “This plan was produced on an expedited basis due to the crisis, and it will remain a living document that is updated and revised on a going-forward basis.”

The federal agencies will now begin to implement the actions contained in this plan, working in close partnership with the State of California to advance their shared priorities.

To view the draft plan, go here: <http://www.doi.gov/documents/CAWaterWorkPlan.pdf>

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