



# CALIFORNIA'S WATER: A CRISIS WE CAN'T IGNORE

September 2007

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## WATER SUPPLY CUTBACKS

California's economy, environment and quality of life are highly dependent on the availability of water. The need to balance human and environmental needs is more important than ever, but it is not always easy. Some environmental protection policies can affect water supply, as in the case of the Delta smelt.

### **Largest Court-Ordered Reduction in California History**

The Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta is home to more than 750 distinct species of plants and wildlife, some of which are considered threatened or endangered. One of these species, the Delta smelt, is listed as threatened on both state and federal endangered species lists.

In the summer of 2007, the state voluntarily stopped pumping at the State Water Project (SWP) Delta pumping facilities for 10 days to protect smelt. Then on Aug. 31, a federal judge ordered a massive reduction in water supplies from the SWP and Central Valley Project (CVP) to protect the Delta smelt while updated federal permits are obtained.

While state and local water agencies are still analyzing the court ruling, initial projections are that it could reduce combined SWP/CVP deliveries by as much as one-third, or 2 million acre-feet of water. This is the single largest court-ordered reduction in statewide water supply in California's history.

### **Communities Statewide Face Cutbacks**

The San Francisco Bay Area, Central and Southern California will experience a significant reduction in water supply because of the most recent court order. The SWP provides water to two out of every three people (approximately 25 million residents), irrigates 750,000 acres of prime agricultural lands and is directly responsible for \$400 million of the state's trillion-dollar economy.

Because local water agencies will have to rely on contingency or emergency sources of water to lessen direct impacts to their customers, they will be dipping into reserves that are already at dangerously low levels. However, by doing so, they will exhaust or significantly limit supplies that would be needed for a drought or major catastrophe, such as an earthquake or major flood.

### **Less Water for Farms, Cities and Businesses**

California is a leading food producer for the nation and the world. The impact of this court-ordered reduction on the state's farming community will be serious. In response to the cutback, some farmers in the San Joaquin Valley, Inland Empire and San Diego regions already are planning to idle their fields this coming winter and spring.

Urban communities will also feel the pinch of tightening water supplies as families and businesses are asked to conserve. In some regions, stringent water restrictions, including rationing, may be imposed and consumers may see their water rates increase.

For more information, visit [www.calwatercrisis.org](http://www.calwatercrisis.org).