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For immediate release

Feb. 20, 2009

Fresno County Farm Bureau issues statement on water supply for County's federal water contractors

Fresno County Farm Bureau has issued the following statement in response to today's announcement of the reduced federal surface water supplies for farmers in Fresno County:

The Statement:

“At a time when everyone across the nation is talking about economic stimulus, it is ironic that we are hit with this huge economic suppressant when Fresno County and its residents -- already plagued with high unemployment -- can least afford it. The impacts from this year's water shortages will be far-reaching and widespread – on a social, economic, hydrological, and resource management basis. The west side of the County makes up 25 percent of Fresno County's \$5.3 billion agriculture industry. With a 0% allocation for the west side, farmers are forced to idle large amount of acreage that would have generated jobs, value-added food products that stimulate significant economic activity for the County and region, and the end result—a safe, wholesome, affordable food supply for consumers throughout the U.S. and abroad. Farmers manage the water as efficiently as possible to grow crops, but the consumer is the ultimate beneficiary of that water. Moreover, significantly reduced supplies to farmers in the Friant service area will impact production along the east side as well. Countywide, there will be more dependence on groundwater, which is already over-drafted in many parts of the County.

“Here in Fresno County, water is our life – it's our jobs and it's our food. Without a reliable water supply, Fresno County's number one employer -- agriculture -- is at great risk. Agriculture is the economic engine that drives the Valley and water is the fuel for that engine. Fresno County Farm Bureau calls for all farmers and rural communities to push for additional surface water and groundwater storage, improved conveyance through the Delta, and a return to common-sense water policies that bring back into balance water allocated for food production, municipal and rural communities, and the environment.”

(more)

Background: *The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation on Friday issued its 2009 initial water allocation for Central Valley Project water contractors, including the west side of Fresno County and certain areas of the County's east side through the Friant Unit. Despite recent rain and snow events, the state's water conditions remain well below average for this time of year and water officials still project a third dry year.*

Fresno County's surface water supply comes from many sources — the Sierras (Kings and San Joaquin River watersheds) serve the east side of the County and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Shasta Reservoir serve the west side of the County. For the west side, extremely dry conditions in Northern California and implementation of a series of environmental regulations and pumping restrictions in the Delta have created an unprecedented 0% allocation for CVP water users south of the Delta, which includes Fresno County-based districts such as Westlands, Panoche, and San Luis water districts and Tranquillity and James irrigation districts, and 17 other districts along the Valley's west side. Likewise, this is the first time water districts north of the Delta (in the Sacramento Valley) will receive a 0% water allocation. Also, the Exchange Contractors, located in western Fresno, Madera, Merced and Stanislaus counties, may possibly see their historic contract supply reduced this year. Because of long-held historic water rights to the San Joaquin River, the Exchange Contract districts have entitlement to San Joaquin River water to make up any shortfalls, which could impact the surface water supply for the east side Friant districts, including some in Fresno County along with Tulare and Kern.

This is an initial allocation which will be reviewed and updated monthly based on changes in precipitation.

Here is the news release from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation:

News Release

RECLAMATION
Managing Water in the West

Mid-Pacific Region

Sacramento, CA
MP-09-022

Media Contact: Pete Lucero, 916-978-5100, plucero@mp.usbr.gov

For Release On: February 20, 2009

Reclamation Announces Initial 2009 Central Valley Project Water Supply Allocation

Today, the Bureau of Reclamation announced the initial Water Year (WY) 2009 allocations for the Federal Central Valley Project (CVP) based on the February 1 runoff forecast from the California Department of Water Resources (DWR).

Reclamation prepared two forecasts: a conservative forecast with a 90-percent chance of having runoff greater than forecasted (90-percent probability of exceedence) and a median forecast with a 50-percent chance of having runoff greater than forecasted (50-percent

probability of exceedence). In the 90-percent exceedence forecast, the unimpaired water year inflow into Shasta Reservoir is about 2.47 million acre-feet. The Shasta Reservoir unimpaired inflow is a criteria used to determine shortages to settlement contractors and refuges.

Reclamation traditionally expresses the monthly forecast as a percentage (see summary table) of the contract total for each of the contract categories. The official allocation is based on the 90-percent exceedence forecast. The 50-percent exceedence forecast is provided for informational and planning purposes.

Mid-Pacific Region Initial Water Year 2009 Supply Forecast February 20, 2009									
Probability of Exceedence Forecasts	Percent of Historical Average Sacramento Valley Index & Year Type	North of Delta Allocation				South of Delta Allocation			
		Ag	M&I	R	WR	Ag	M&I	R	WR
Dry Forecast (90%)	41% Critical	0%	50%*	75%	75%**	0%	50%*	75%	77%
Median Forecast (50%)	55% Critical	10%	60%*	100%	100%	10%	60%*	100%	100%

Ag = Agriculture
M&I = Municipal and Industrial

R = Refuges
WR = Water Rights

M&I supply is based on historical deliveries

*The allocation percentage for M&I is approximate and may be adjusted to meet public health and safety needs.

**The potential for further reductions may exist if critically dry conditions continue.

The allocation for the Friant Division Contractors will be 25 percent Class 1 water and 0 percent Class 2 water based on the 90-percent exceedence forecast. The New Melones 90-percent exceedence inflow forecast for WY 2009 is 360,000 acre-feet, and as a result, no water supply is available for CVP Eastside Division (Stanislaus River) contractors.

During this critically dry period, Reclamation is closely coordinating with the State of California, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and other Federal, State, and local organizations to fulfill its water supply obligations, which include water quality and the protection of fish and wildlife and associated habitats.

“These are challenging times, and Reclamation will continue to explore all options within our authorities to minimize the impacts to those affected by this water shortage,” stated Donald Glaser, Regional Director for the Mid-Pacific Region.

In the coming months, updates to this forecast will be announced and information will be posted on the Region’s website at <http://www.usbr.gov/mp>. Please contact the Public Affairs Office at 916-978-5100 or e-mail ibr2mprpao@mp.usbr.gov for additional information.

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Reclamation is the largest wholesale water supplier and the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the United States, with operations and facilities in the 17 western states. Its facilities also provide substantial flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits. Visit our website at <http://www.usbr.gov>.