



December 21, 2018

The Honorable Diane Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kamala Harris
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jared Huffman
1406 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Prioritization of WIIN Act funding

Dear Senator Feinstein, Senator Harris, and Representative Huffman:

Our organizations continue to advocate that Congress consider the WIIN Act extension in regular order, with hearings next year. In the new Congress, our organizations urge you to consider funding new water supplies that are environmentally superior to new dams, including recycling, storm water capture, and groundwater treatment, including desalination of brackish groundwater. Demand management, including fallowing of impaired farmland, and increases in efficiency of agricultural and urban water use, is also essential in adapting to severe droughts and climate change. For more details, see the Environmental Water Caucus report, *A Sustainable Water Plan for California*.¹

We also urge you to prioritize the San Luis (B.F. Sisk) Dam seismic remediation over funding for new California dams under the WIIN Act extension. If necessary, major multi-year spending commitments should be delayed until costs for the seismic remediation of San Luis Dam are available. There is a long standing issue with geotechnical deficiencies in the San Luis Dam embankments.² The dam is also in a very seismically active area. Independently reviewed risk assessments for Reclamation have shown that a large earthquake could lead to crest settlement and overtopping of the dam, which would result in large uncontrolled releases and likely dam failure.^{3,4}

Failure of the dam would create an enormous path of destruction, almost 10 miles wide and over 80 miles long, from Los Banos to Antioch in the western Delta. The inundation would immediately hit Santa Nella (population 1,400) and Los Banos (population 37,000). It would flow through western Merced and Stanislaus counties, impacting West Modesto (population 5,600.) In San Joaquin County, the inundation would impact the western part of Manteca (population 72,000), the western part of Stockton (population 298,000.) In Contra Costa County, the inundation would impact Discovery Bay (population 14,000), and Brentwood (population 55,000.) In 2003, the San Joaquin County Office of Emergency Services estimated that 165,000 people were in the inundation path in San Joaquin County alone.⁵ Failure of the dam would also cause major disruptions for years in the water supply for the Central Valley Project and State Water Project.

¹ The Environmental Water Caucus Report, *A Sustainable Water Plan for California* is available at <http://www.ewccalifornia.org/reports/ewcwaterplan9-1-2015.pdf>

² For more details, see Reclamation's fact sheet, *B.F. Sisk dam – Geologic and Geotechnical Investigations*. Available at <https://www.usbr.gov/mp/sod/projects/sisk/docs/sisk-geo-investigations.pdf>

³ For more details, see California Water Research's March 12, 2017 blog post, *Full San Luis Dam Endangers Over 200,000 People*. Available at <https://cah2oresearch.com/2017/03/12/full-san-luis-dam-endangers-over-200000-people/>

⁴ Some information is also still available Reclamation's web page on the B.F. Sisk Dam seismic remediation. Available at <https://www.usbr.gov/mp/sod/projects/sisk/>

⁵ For more details, see California Water Research's March 12, 2017 blog post, *Full San Luis Dam Endangers Over 200,000 People*.

The Bureau of Reclamation has known about deficiencies in the dam embankments since 1981, when a 1,100 foot section of the embankment slid 177 feet. It was a deep seated failure which extended through the embankment and into the native soil under the dam. Reclamation initiated a formal corrective action study in 2007, and action on the remediation is scheduled to begin in 2020.⁶ Not only has Reclamation not released the final corrective action study, Reclamation has not prioritized the funding for the remediation, which Reclamation estimated at \$600 to \$700 million in 2017.⁷ Given the public safety hazards, this situation is unacceptable. If construction on the San Luis Dam remediation is not commenced by 2020, San Luis Dam should have a seismic restriction on the height of water stored behind the embankments, to protect the dam from failure in an earthquake.⁸ Such a restriction would result in a decrease in deliveries to both State Water Project and Central Valley Project, increasing conflicts with Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta exports.

San Luis Dam is the largest offstream dam in the United States. Both public safety and water supply reliability require action to remediate major known seismic deficiencies. We respectfully request that Congress prioritize funding for this remediation over construction of new dams in California

Sincerely,



Bill Jennings, Executive Director
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance



Carolee Krieger, Executive Director
California Water Impact Network

⁶ For more details, see Reclamation’s schedule, *B.F. Sisk SOD Modification – Schedule*. Available at <https://www.usbr.gov/mp/sod/projects/sisk/docs/esm/project-timeline.pdf>

⁷ For more details, see Ezra David Romero, *Watchdogs and Feds Say San Luis Reservoir at Risk if an Earthquake Strikes*, Valley Public Radio, April 17, 2017. Available at <https://www.kvpr.org/post/watchdogs-and-feds-say-san-luis-reservoir-risk-if-earthquake-strikes>



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cc:

California Department of Water Resources Director Karla Nemeth

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Brenda Burman

Delta Stewardship Council

California Water Commission

California State Water Resources Control Board