

**U.S. Representative TJ Cox (CA-21)**

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TESTIMONY FOR THE RECORD

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEMBERS' DAY HEARING

MAY 15, 2019

Thank you, Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves, for giving members the opportunity to share their priorities as the Committee begins to tackle infrastructure legislation.

I appreciate the chance to highlight the needs of and major challenges facing the Central Valley, in particular, the dire need to increase investments in California's water infrastructure.

Many of you may know that California's Central Valley, the source of over half of our nation's fruits and vegetables, is stressed by a lack of water supply reliability. Valley communities depend on the dams and canals of the federal Central Valley Project not only to deliver water for irrigation, but also as a source of drinking water for small and rural communities. It is also essential for managing floods and preserving fish and wildlife habitats across iconic working landscapes.

The Friant-Kern Canal, which runs 152 miles from Millerton Lake to the Kern river, provides critical conveyance of drinking and irrigation water supply for rural communities on the east side of the San Joaquin Valley. The canal relies entirely on gravity to deliver water to communities and over 1 million acres of farmland.

Because of subsidence, the Friant-Kern canal has lost roughly 60% of its carrying capacity, as the canal has literally sunk into the ground creating pinch points upstream of some of the largest users of water, causing severe economic impacts.

The Delta-Mendota Canal provides agricultural, refuge, and drinking water supplies to communities and farmers throughout California, including 1.2 million acres of irrigated agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley, approximately 2 million people in Silicon Valley, and over 200,000 acres of managed habitat of critical importance to the Pacific Flyway and various endangered species. This canal carries water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta 116.5 miles, delivering water to the federal San Luis Reservoir along the way, and eventually connecting with the San Joaquin River near Mendota, California.

Funding to repair and upgrade these vital arteries in the Central Valley will improve surface water deliveries and increase the efficiency and utility of current water supply.

In absence of reliable water supply, farmers and residents depend on groundwater, which has led to land subsidence from overdraft of the groundwater aquifers. Through groundwater recharge initiatives, Valley communities are working diligently to counteract subsidence and reduce over pumping that has damaged conveyance infrastructure managed by the State of California and federal Bureau of Reclamation.

More federal support for groundwater recharge and storage projects to replenish the groundwater basins and prevent additional subsidence will be beneficial. In addition, federal support will help to reduce groundwater contamination through improved wastewater treatment capabilities.

As the state of California moves toward implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), the inability to efficiently move water through the Friant-Kern canal creates significant hurdles as it limits the ability to move water from Millerton Lake through to the southern end of the Friant service area. This part of the San Joaquin Valley has significant groundwater recharge potential, but it can only be fully realized if the infrastructure exists to deliver water during times when excess flows are in the system.

Drinking water and wastewater treatment for rural and small communities is essential to their livelihood and ensures that all Americans have an affordable, safe, and reliable food supply. There are families in my district that cannot drink the water out of their taps due to poor water quality and contamination issues. According to recent reports, as many as one million Californians lack drinking water that meets federal standards. American consumers, including our hardworking farmworker communities that break their backs to put food on our tables, deserve the security of a high-quality, clean drinking water supply.

Thank you for considering the needs of my constituents and I hope to see Congress prioritize funding for these initiatives, which will improve the lives of residents of the Central Valley and increase the food security of our nation.