

**Statement of Congressman David G. Valadao
Before the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment regarding
the Water Resources Development Act of 2022**

March 16, 2022

Good afternoon Chair Napolitano, Ranking Member Rouzer, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for this opportunity to advocate for my requests for the Water Resources Development Act of 2022.

I am glad to see the committee is planning to stay on the two-year track with WRDA legislation. Improving projects, processes, and access to water is crucial, especially in districts like mine. Even though many of the federal assets in my district and across California are managed by the Bureau of Reclamation, there are still opportunities in WRDA bills to help the Central Valley.

I would like to start by discussing my request to include my legislation, the *RENEW WIIN Act*, in the base bill. This legislation was actually first enacted in the WRDA bill of 2016, which was ultimately signed into law as the WIIN Act.

According to a study from UC Merced, the drought directly cost the agriculture economy in California 1.1 billion dollars and 8,750 jobs last year. The Central Valley desperately needs water, and this no-cost, clean extension of the operations and storage provisions in the WIIN Act is an important step to ensure a reliable water supply for our communities.

Specifically, the bill extends through 2031 the authority of the Bureau of Reclamation to provide support for federal or state-led water storage projects in certain western states. It also extends provisions specific to California, including drought relief and the operations of the Central Valley Project, which is a hydropower and water management project in California that is operated by the Bureau of Reclamation.

Further, the bill extends through 2036 consultation requirements concerning biological assessments and the coordinated operations of the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project in California.

My next request is about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Big Dry Creek Reservoir and the Fancher Creek Reservoir in Fresno County. The project was originally designed to help the San Joaquin Valley region with flood control. The language submitted to you would provide the Army Corps with authority for the temporary storage of water which is much needed in our region.

Groundwater basins in the San Joaquin Valley have long suffered from critical overdraft. Prolonged drought, like what we are currently facing, has enhanced the need for additional water

storage in the region. Reoperation of the Redbank and Fancher Creeks project would greatly help the area by temporarily storing and redistributing the water for recharge to better balance groundwater levels for our communities and economy.

This project will provide the necessary evaluation and improvements to reoperate reservoirs within the Redbank and Fancher Creeks Project, primarily the Big Dry Creek Reservoir. Reoperation will allow for the holding of storm water into spring and summer for later release into the region's extensive system of groundwater recharge basins. The ability to capture, store, and effectively use these flows is critical to the region's efforts to balance water use and long-term water sustainability. Repetitive and often severe drought experienced by the Fresno/Clovis region calls for the water supply resiliency afforded by maximizing the storage of surface water.

The project will serve as a conservation pool for short-term storage of available surface waters up to 15,000 acre-feet, and will be used for downstream beneficial uses, primarily direct and indirect recharge, within the critically over drafted groundwater basin. This project will help meet the water needs of our communities which are mainly disadvantaged.

Finally, I would like to highlight my final request that would amend the Army Corps project purpose to include water supply. Given the increasing frequency of periods of excess water and excess drought as a result of extreme weather conditions, this additional authority would help to utilize and maximize storage capacity to serve the beneficial uses in California.

This is a cost-effective way to prepare for drought emergencies and increase climate resiliencies. The provision provides the Secretary with more flexibility in how they are able to adapt to future climate scenarios.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to highlight the importance of my WRDA requests. I hope you will seriously consider the inclusion of these requests in the base bill.