

April 7, 2016

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chair
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell:

The undersigned organizations write to request that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources schedule without delay a markup on the California Long-Term Provisions for Water Supply and Short-Term Provisions for Emergency Drought Relief Act (S. 2533). Action on this important legislation offers a way forward to address California's severe drought conditions and put into place immediate and long-term policies and programs to lessen future adverse impacts from climate challenges and population growth. Committee action and subsequent Senate floor debate and vote on S. 2533 is important to allow Congress to complete work on a drought relief bill. We believe that S. 2533's focus on alternative water supply infrastructure needs enjoys broad stakeholder support that can lead to actual progress on the ground to address water supply scarcity while protecting our ecosystems.

The entire western United States is experiencing drought conditions ranging from severe to extraordinary conditions. From communities that rely on the Colorado River to California's urban and rural cities and towns to the Northwest and its severe wildfires, the extreme challenges posed by extended drought conditions demand federal support and a redoubling of our national commitment to support measures that will deliver safe and reliable water supplies. The debate surrounding the balance of human and ecosystem demands can be appropriately addressed if Congress develops a policy to address the needs of the 21ST Century. A final drought measure that the committee acts on must maintain the commitment to development of alternative water supply infrastructure as embodied within S. 2533. Only through such an approach can we assure consensus from a variety of interests. Stakeholders ranging from water agencies to environmental groups have endorsed the value delivered through traditional and innovative management practices such as water recycling, stormwater capture, and groundwater banking projects. Other conservation activities can supplement and enhance such projects. We are also encouraged by calls to promote the use of real time monitoring and the best science available on which to base water management decisions.

Again, we are hopeful that your committee will consider S. 2533 individually or as part of a comprehensive western drought relief bill. In the event that a west-wide bill is the committee's preference, we urge that you incorporate S. 2533's alternative water supply infrastructure provisions in such a bill. Only through such an approach will the tools be available to federal, state and local water resources managers to meet the challenges of the new normal of water supply.

Sincerely,



Roberta L. Larson
Executive Director, CASA



Kelly Collins
President, WESTCAS

