

California Cuts Water to Farms, Lawmakers Want to Buy Farmer's Water Rights

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California farms produce over half of the country's fruits, nuts, and vegetables, but state regulators have drastically the cut water supply to farmers, and it will impact the country's food supply. State officials want to buy the water rights from farmers as they drive them out of business with burdensome regulations. Last year, the California State Water Board drained reservoirs that were designed to provide a steady five year supply of water for all users.

Summary by JW Williams

California farms produce over half of the country's fruits, nuts, and vegetables. The food supply is in jeopardy because the State Water Resources Control Board restricted water supplies to scores of San Joaquin Valley farmers to stop pulling water from rivers. Farmers and other rights holders on the Sacramento River have already lost vast amounts of their water this year due to separate cutbacks mandated by the US Bureau of Reclamation, resulting in widespread idling of rice fields in the Sacramento Valley.

California has a \$100-billion budget surplus and lawmakers hope to spend \$1.5 billion to buy water rights back from farmers, to keep water in rivers for endangered fish. Republican state Senator Brian Dahle, whose family has been farming in California for 92 years, said the only reason farmers would be willing to sell is because state officials

are driving them out of business with burdensome regulations.

Statewide, average water use is roughly 50% environmental, 40% agricultural, and 10% urban." Namely, the 50% flows into the Pacific Ocean for environmental preservation and for the life of fish.

Politicians are blaming global warming for the drought. But California Farm Water Coalition says that California's drought conditions are actually historically normal however. Each of California's droughts are billed by government and media as the driest period in the state's recorded rainfall history. However, scientists who study the Western United States' long-term climate patterns say California has been dry for significantly longer periods – more than 200 years.

California's reservoirs were designed to provide a steady five year supply of water for all users, and were filled to the top in June 2019, but the California State Water Board drained them, allowing the stored water to flow into the sea last year in May 2021. The water was ostensibly used to try to save fish populations, but an early version of the Water Board's own report suggested their plan would result in little more than an additional 1,000 fish per year.

CalMatters:

<https://calmatters.org/environment/2022/06/california-delta-water-cutbacks/>

California Globe:

<https://californiaglobe.com/articles/california-farm-water-coalition-warns-domestic-food-supply-in-peril-with-state-cutting-water/>

Sac Bee:

<https://www.sacbee.com/news/california/water-and-drought/article262302232.html>

California Globe:

<https://californiaglobe.com/fl/ca-reservoirs-filled-to-top-in-2019-being-drained-by-state/>

Sacramento Citizen:

<https://sacramentocitizen.wordpress.com/2017/08/17/californias-political-water-scams-back-on-ballot/>