

House Passes Legislation to End ‘Man-Made Drought’

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley Water Reliability Act (H.R. 1837) in a bipartisan vote of 246 to 175. The legislation, introduced by Congressman Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) will end a “man-

made drought,” which is the result of water intended for California farm and ranch land irrigation being cut off and diverted to the San Francisco Bay in the name of protecting a 3-inch minnow, the Delta smelt.

“For far too long, radical environmental groups have abused environmental laws and trampled on the private water rights of cattlemen. In this instance, they did it in the name of protecting a 3-inch fish. This is absurd.

While the water diversions for the fish have produced negligible benefit, some of the most productive agricultural land has been left fallow, and thousands of Californians have been put in unemployment lines,” said Joe Guild, chairman of the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) Federal Lands Committee and a Public Lands Council (PLC) board member. “We commend Congressman Nunes for his leadership on this issue and for the 246 bipartisan members of Congress who voted to provide certainty to agricultural producers by demanding commonsense policy. We will continue working to stop extreme environmental groups from obstructing the on-the-ground conservation and sound land and resource management practices cattlemen and women provide each and every day as they work to produce food for a growing global population.”

Decades-old water policy in the state of California has ensured that more than 27 million water users in the central and southern regions of California have access to water via a complex network of water storage and delivery systems. However, lawsuits brought by environmental radicals claiming that the water pumps were the primary factor in the population decline of the Delta smelt led to water delivery being restricted, and, in some instances, completely prevented from being delivered to Central Valley farmers and ranchers. While there are other factors contributing to the population decline of the Delta smelt, the water diversion has resulted in hundreds of thousands of acres of farm and ranch land being left fallow and more than 10,000 farm workers being sent to unemployment lines.

Dustin Van Liew, NCBA director of federal lands and PLC executive director, said while it is important to fix this issue and restore certainty to California farmers and ranchers, this is further proof that it is time to take a look at reforming the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which has not been updated or improved in nearly 25 years.

“ESA was intended to protect species from the endangerment of extinction. Over the years, however, environmental extremists have exploited that well-intended law as a means to achieve their goal of blocking responsible use of land and resources and ending animal agriculture,” Van Liew said. “The House Committee on Natural Resources has held a hearing on the costly challenges created by ESA. We encourage the committee to look to this issue as further proof of the need for commonsense, feasible and achievable ESA reforms.”

