

Schwarzenegger's office speaks out on water issues

Publisher's Note: *The following text is all from Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's staff.*

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Wednesday issued the following statement after U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Obama administration officials announced federal actions that will be taken to address California's water crisis:

“Californians are suffering from an extreme water crisis due to a three-year drought and two federal biological opinions that have shut off the water pumps to parched families, farmers and workers. (Wednesday's) announcement shows that the federal government recognizes the significance of California's water crisis and the role our farmers play in feeding the nation. I applaud Secretary Salazar and the Obama administration for calling upon the National Academy of Sciences for an independent review of the biological studies that put a tiny fish over hard working Californians and urge them to approve my request for a disaster declaration for Fresno County to relieve the suffering in the near-term.”

On Sept. 1, Schwarzenegger asked Salazar and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke to take a second look at two recent biological opinions that protect threatened fish species in the Delta. Yesterday the governor's request was granted.

Salazar announced the departments of Interior and Commerce have agreed to have the National Academy of Sciences independently review the science used for these biological opinions to see if there are ways to provide greater flexibility for our water systems while protecting the environment.

It was also announced that six federal agencies have signed a

memorandum of understanding that reestablishes federal leadership on California Bay Delta issues, including active involvement in on-going state efforts, such as the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, to help provide an assured water supply while restoring the environmental integrity of the Bay Delta.

Schwarzenegger is committed to ensuring that California's farmers, ranchers and residents are protected from the most devastating effects of our three year drought. Some of the governor's most significant actions this year include:

• On Feb. 27, the governor proclaimed a state of emergency and ordered immediate action to manage and combat California's third consecutive year of drought.

• On June 19, the governor issued Executive Order S-11-09 authorizing funding under the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA) to provide temporary supplemental assistance to local governments and nonprofit organizations that provide food and other aid to those impacted by the drought statewide.

• On July 16, the Department of Finance approved nearly \$4 million in funding for the Department of Social Services to provide food for a minimum of five weeks to the drought victims in Fresno County.

• On July 21, the governor proclaimed a State of Emergency in Fresno County and directed Cal EMA to provide local government assistance under the authority of the CDAA.

• Beginning July 28, drought related food distribution centers were scheduled by the Fresno Food Bank for every first and third Thursdays in Huron, first and third Tuesdays in San Joaquin, second and fourth Fridays in Firebaugh, second and fourth Tuesdays in Mendota, and second and fourth Thursdays in Selma.

• On Aug. 24, the governor submitted California's appeal of the denial for a major disaster declaration due to severe

drought conditions in Fresno. The governor's original request dated June 19, was denied on July 24. FEMA's response to the appeal is still pending.