

Saving fish species could cut summer water supply

By Ryan Sabalow, Dale Kasler and Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

This year was supposed to be different. With Northern California's reservoirs finally brimming and cities liberated from stringent conservation rules, farmers were expecting more water for their crops. The worst of the drought seemed over.

Or maybe not.

Despite a winter of fairly abundant rain and snow in the north state, federal fisheries regulators are considering a set of plans that would put Sacramento Valley reservoirs on a tight leash again this summer. Their aim is to prevent two endangered California fish species from going extinct.

Critics say two federal plans under discussion could cause another year of water shortages in farms and cities across the state. The Sacramento area's main reservoir, Folsom Lake, could get drawn down below average levels once more, although the situation wouldn't be as severe as last year's record low. Fifteen members of Congress from California sent a letter urging the Obama administration to reject the dam-management proposals, saying they would "significantly reduce the water supply available to Californians."

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