



## H.R. 2898 (Valadao): Summary of Key Environmental Threats

On June 25, 2015, Representative Valadao introduced H.R. 2898. This controversial bill would undermine critical protections for our environment and other water users rather than provide actual “drought relief.” Further, this legislation would be a **permanent change in law**—it is not a temporary drought response—and includes provisions that could impact states across the West. Instead of promoting collaborative solutions to create new water supply to benefit the environment and economy, as California has done in recent years, this bill simply weakens environmental and water quality protections to benefit certain water users at the expense of all others.

- H.R. 2898 would **severely weaken and override protections for salmon and other native fisheries** listed under the Endangered Species Act (“ESA”) in California’s Bay-Delta estuary. The bill weakens the legal standard under the ESA, reduces legal protections for wild salmon runs in favor of hatchery fish, and micromanages the state and federal water projects by replacing scientifically justified limits on water operations with political judgments. These changes could devastate fish and wildlife and the thousands of fishing jobs in California and Oregon that depend on them.
- H.R. 2898 could **reduce water deliveries to national wildlife refuges and state wildlife management areas, devastating migratory birds and other species** that depend upon refuge habitats. The bill would make it more difficult for the refuges to receive water during dry years and could threaten critical funding for the refuge water supply program. The refuges cannot provide essential wildlife habitat without adequate water, and the bill’s attacks on the refuges’ water supply could be disastrous for the Pacific Flyway.
- H.R. 2898 would **repeal the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement Act, harming native salmon runs and Central Valley farmers.** The bill would undo an agreement that settled decades of litigation, and would result in the San Joaquin River running completely dry in most years as farmers divert every drop. It would destroy the salmon runs that have already been reintroduced, and would harm local farmers by eliminating water supply and flood control projects that benefit agriculture in the region.
- H.R. 2898 would **preempt state law, forcing California to weaken its environmental protections.** The bill ignores important sovereignty concerns and directly preempts existing state law, including by repealing state law requiring restoration of the San Joaquin River, overriding state laws on senior water rights, and overriding the State’s authority to ensure Shasta Dam is operated to protect fish, wildlife, and other water users.
- H.R. 2898 would **waive or limit environmental review of new dams and other water projects, impacting states and communities across the West.** The bill would completely exempt some projects from review under the National Environmental Policy Act, establish unrealistic timelines for completion of environmental reviews, and give the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation unprecedented control over the environmental review process. These changes, which would impact states throughout the West, remove environmental safeguards and undermine the rights of communities to weigh in on projects that could affect them for decades.