

# Calif. coalition: Feds, turn on the pumps

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A coalition of economic associations from up and down California representing more than 11,000 employers is asking the federal government to open the Delta pumps to take advantage of spring storms.

Employers associated with the Regional Economic Association Leaders Coalition, or REAL, have created more than 3 million jobs. In a letter this week, the group asked Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell and Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker to reevaluate operating criteria for the Central Valley Project and State Water Project that have curtailed water deliveries due to environmental restrictions.

Al Smith, president and CEO of the Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce, is one of the 21 REAL Coalition members signing the letter, along with:

- Carl Guardino, co-chair, Silicon Valley Leadership Group
- Bill Allen, Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp.
- Robert Linschied, San Francisco Chamber of Commerce
- Russell Hancock, Joint Venture Silicon Valley
- Roger Niello, Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce

The REAL Coalition represents the top 10 cities in the state, which in turn make up about 35 percent of the state's population, Smith said. Fresno is the only city in the Central Valley large enough for a place in the group, he added.

The letter states that existing protections for endangered fish in Delta pumping operations are more than adequate, as evidenced by low numbers of species killed in the pumps this year.

Perhaps underscoring the political stakes involved when it comes to environmental issues and the Delta, the letter states the request shouldn't be taken as an attack on environmental policy.

"Please note that this request should not be viewed as our position relative to environmental protection, except in a clear crisis situation," the letter states. "In fact, the REAL Coalition acknowledges that the health of the environment and the reliability of our water supplies are inextricably linked and supports the co-equal goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem."

In a statement, Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearingin applauded the REAL Coalition's stance.

"I am hopeful that Secretary Jewell and Secretary Pritzker will respond to our request by supporting this opportunity to enable our state to provide much needed water and maximize our water storage for future usage."