



Defenders Opposition to Title V Fact Sheet

Title V “Water for California” rider to the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies appropriations bill



Defenders of Wildlife opposes the Title V “Water for California” rider to the Energy and Water Development appropriations bill, which is substantially similar to pending bill H.R. 215 by Congressman Valadao (R-CA22). Both are a direct attack on wildlife and wetland habitat in California.

Subtitles A and B: Central Valley Project and State Water Projects Operations and Allocations to Sacramento Valley Contractors

What – The operations of both the Central Valley Project (CVP) and the State Water Project (SWP) are done in accordance with biological opinions that assess the long-term impacts of project operations. Title V would reinstate Trump-era biological opinions with weaker wildlife protections. It would require CVP and SWP to receive 100 percent of its water allocations ahead of those for watershed agreements and would severely impact wildlife and plant species protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Threat – Title V reverts the operation of the CVP and SWP to the 2019 biological opinions for the next seven years that weaken or remove protections for salmon and other species listed under the Endangered Species Act. This sets a dangerous precedent for the already overexploited San Francisco Bay-Delta.

Subtitle C: Shasta Dam Enlargement

What – Shasta Lake is the largest reservoir in the Central Valley Project. The Bureau of Reclamation seeks to override state law in order to enlarge the Shasta Reservoir. Per the California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, construction or planning of infrastructure that could degrade the flow of the McCloud River (Winnemem Wintu Tribe lands) or its trout fisheries is prohibited. The California Attorney’s General Office won a preliminary injunction to stop a previous enlargement effort in 2019. Under Title V, “no provision of State law shall preclude or otherwise prevent... the planning and construction” of the Bureau of Reclamation’s efforts to enlarge the Shasta Dam.

Threat – The Bureau of Reclamation has already admitted that the actions carried out to enlarge the Shasta Dam would have adverse, detrimental impacts on the Winnemem Wintu Tribe and their sacred sites. Defenders is



Fall-run Chinook Salmon Courtesy U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

also concerned with the threat against state protected native salmon runs and the direct impact that would have on the West Coast fishing industry. This is particularly concerning given the salmon fishery season is closed for only the third time in state history as a result of historically low numbers of Chinook salmon.

Subtitle D: Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA)

What – The CVPIA adds requirements for the CVP to prioritize wildlife protections and habitat restoration alongside irrigation and residential usage. The CVPIA promises a water supply that maintains and improves wetland refuges in the CVP.

Threat – Title V would preemptively deem CVPIA goals and objectives complete following the construction of the refuge water supply system or by September 30, 2025, whichever is later. This is clearly not a science-based proclamation and further threatens salmon populations, which are mandated to double under current law. Water-supply reductions to wetland refuges are also concerning and may lead to inadequate food supplies for migratory birds and overcrowding.