

# Republicans propose massive change in California water regulations

*Say it would mean more water for San Joaquin Valley from the Delta / Delta advocates say it's bad legislation*

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The three Republican congressmen from the San Joaquin Valley are sponsoring a bill that they say would increase the amount of water pumped from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to farmers and others in the Valley.

The Republicans – Devin Nunes of Tulare, Kevin McCarthy of Bakersfield who holds the powerful position of majority whip, and Jeff Denham of Merced -- say the lack of water in recent years was due to government restrictions.

Their bill would take care of that by making the terms of a 1994 agreement known as the Bay-Delta Accord into federal law, overriding rules and regulations that have been put in place since 1994.

“This landmark legislation would get water flowing again in the Central Valley by knocking down onerous and unfounded government regulations that can leave our farmers high and dry,” says Mr. McCarthy.

But not everyone sees it that way, especially those who live or work in the Delta.

“As shown in recent research by Jeffrey Michael of [the University of the Pacific], farm jobs have grown faster than any other sector of the economy in the past 12 months,” says Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, head of a group called Restore the Delta. “The primary cause behind the Central Valley’s decline in jobs can be attributed to the housing crash of several years ago, not a decline in water deliveries.”

She says the Bay-Delta Accord resulted in record levels of water exports from the Delta. Returning to it would “bring the Delta right back to the precipice of 2006,” she says.

Ms. Barrigan-Parrilla says the GOP bill is designed to help a few dozen landowners associated with large-scale agribusiness like that on the West side of the San Joaquin Valley.

“The Delta, which supports nearly 1,000 family farmers, marinas, a five-county urban area, and a coastal commercial fishing industry, has an economy valued at roughly \$5 billion per year,” she says. “If we really want to create jobs and grow California’s economy, keeping the Delta healthy with sufficient water flows is essential.”

But Mr. Denham says the current system of controls on water exports from the Delta is “outdated and unworkable” and “have hindered California’s farms and economy for more than a decade.”

A spokeswoman for Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., who is the former chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, says the congressman opposed the Republicans’ bill.