

# **Brown signs bill to improve water conveyance in SJ Valley**

**Tim Hearden, Capital Press, 10-8-16**

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Jerry Brown has signed a bill that citrus industry representatives say will provide added flexibility in moving water to some of their drought-parched groves.

The bill by Assemblyman Rudy Salas, D-Bakersfield, authorizes the Department of Water Resources to make improvements to pumps on the Friant-Kern Canal in the eastern San Joaquin Valley.

The project, for which up to \$7 million is expected to be included in Brown's next budget, will enable water that was sent to the San Joaquin River for fish flows and recaptured downstream to be pumped back up the Friant-Kern canal to some Friant Division contractors, according to an Assembly bill analysis.

California Citrus Mutual president Joel Nelsen said the law will improve the ability to use the Cross Valley Canal in Bakersfield to move water to where it is needed and make it easier to do water transfers.

"It doesn't ... create water, but it does create some flexibility for using what water exists," said Nelsen, whose 2,500-member organization co-sponsored the bill.

The project will "allow us to manage our water supply more efficiently and provide needed relief to those who have suffered ongoing drought conditions," Salas said in a statement.

The ability to recapture water flushed through the San Joaquin River is part of a 2006 settlement with environmental groups that sued over inadequate flows for chinook salmon in parts of the river, which is overburdened.

The project would build new permanent pump-back facilities at the south end of the Friant-Kern Canal and move up to 30,000 acre-feet of water annually. Water managers could also use the system for banking groundwater in wet years.

The ability to move whatever water is available in the San Joaquin Valley to the most drought-stricken areas has been identified as a key need as state and federal surface water allocations have been dramatically reduced in recent years.

Nelsen and others have advocated more cross-valley conveyance projects to be funded through Proposition 1, the \$7.5 billion water bond voters passed in 2014, but the Legislature is barred from designating Proposition 1 funds for specific water projects.

Salas' legislation — Assembly Bill 935 — is one of several key water bills signed recently by Brown. Senate Bill 1262 by state Sen. Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, requires cities and counties to consider groundwater availability and impact when making land-use decisions.

Senate Bill 1263 by Sen. Bob Wieckowski, D-Fremont, increases the scrutiny the State Water Resources Control Board will place on permits for new, small public water systems in an effort to ensure areas served by the new agency will have safe drinking water.

Wieckowski said most public water systems in California serve fewer than 200 connections, and that larger systems are better equipped to meet the state's water quality standards.