

# San Francisco Chronicle

## House GOP pushes bill to pump more delta water

By Carolyn Lochhead

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WASHINGTON — House Republicans from the San Joaquin Valley advanced legislation Thursday that would deliver more water to their constituents, a replay of their failed efforts throughout California's four-year drought.

Eager to show that they are doing something in Washington as water deliveries are slashed for farmers holding even the oldest and most secure water rights in the state, Republicans repurposed legislation backed last year by House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy of Bakersfield that would pump more water south through the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. The bill would override protections for endangered fish and push new dams and reservoirs.

If the increased delta pumping threatens endangered salmon with extinction, the bill would direct federal agencies to determine whether the fishes' plight was caused by something other than a lack of water before pumping can be restricted.



Photo: Rich Pedroncelli, Associated Press  
**The John E. Skinner Delta Fish Protective Facility is near Tracy. House Republicans' proposed bill would override protections for endangered fish.**

The legislation cleared the House Natural Resources Committee on a largely party-line vote Thursday. The lone Democrat to side with the GOP was Rep. Jim Costa of Fresno, who has aligned himself with Republicans on water. McCarthy has made it a top priority for action in July, and it is expected to pass the full House on a party-line vote as early as next week.

Republicans held no public hearings on the legislation.

Rep. Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael, battled the bill in committee and introduced his own legislation this week that emphasizes recycling, watershed restoration in the Sierra and groundwater recharge, as well as speeding approval of new reservoirs and other surface storage that could be completed within 10 years.

Huffman said his bill came from collaboration with experts and stakeholders around the state and a novel crowd-sharing experiment that solicited nearly 1,000 ideas from the public. Those include a \$2,000 tax credit to homeowners to install gray-water systems that can collect and reuse water from showers and laundry.

"There certainly is plenty we could do to help people and to address our water shortages," Huffman said, adding that the GOP bill is "is not even remotely close to that kind of response."

McCarthy said in a statement when the bill was introduced that it would "restore the water our communities desperately need by more fully utilizing the most sophisticated water system in the world."

The bill's chances in the Senate look dim. Republicans would need six Democratic votes to overcome a filibuster. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., has long been sympathetic to farmers and spent months last year negotiating similar legislation with House Republicans, but her office said she was not involved in the new version.

Feinstein has said the bill's latest incarnation "includes some useful provisions" to make it easier to deliver water to farms, along with others that "violate environmental law, which I've said many times I cannot support." Feinstein said she wants a more comprehensive approach that includes such things as water recycling and desalination.

Rep. David Valadao, R-Hanford (Kings County), is the main sponsor of the GOP bill. Valadao is pushing separate legislation to speed approval of five new reservoirs or dam expansions, including raising the Shasta and Los Vaqueros dams, expanding the San Luis reservoir, and building new dams at Sites, north of the delta, and Temperance Flat, behind the existing Friant Dam east of Fresno.

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<http://www.sfgate.com/science/article/House-GOP-pushes-bill-to-pump-more-delta-water-6376064.php>