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Statement on Signing the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act

December 16, 2016

Today I am signing the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act into law. It authorizes vital water projects across the country to restore watersheds, improve waterways and flood control, and improve drinking water infrastructure. The law also authorizes $170 million for communities facing drinking water emergencies, including funding for Flint, Michigan, to recover from the lead contamination in its drinking water system. That help for Flint is a priority of this administration. WINN also includes four Indian water rights settlements that resolve longstanding claims to water and the conflicts surrounding those claims, address the needs of native communities, fulfill the Federal trust responsibility to American Indians, and provide a sound base for greater economic development for both the affected tribes and their non-Indian neighbors.

Title III, subtitle J, of the law has both short-term and long-term provisions related to addressing the continuing drought in California. In the long term, it invests in a number of water projects to promote water storage and supply, flood control, desalination, and water recycling. These projects will help assure that California is more resilient in the face of growing water demands and drought-based uncertainty.

Title III, subtitle J, also includes short-term provisions governing operations of the Federal and State water projects under the Endangered Species Act for up to 5 years, regardless of drought condition. Building on the work of previous administrations, my administration has worked closely with the State of California and other affected parties to address the critical elements of California's complex water challenges by accommodating the needs and concerns of California water users and the important species that depend on that same water. This important partnership has helped us achieve a careful balance based on existing State and Federal law. It is essential that it not be undermined by anyone who seeks to override that balance by misstating or incorrectly reading the provisions of subtitle J. Consistent with the legislative history supporting these provisions, I interpret and understand subtitle J to require continued application and implementation of the Endangered Species Act, consistent with the close and cooperative work of Federal agencies with the State of California to assure that State water quality standards are met. This reading of the short-term operational provisions carries out the letter and spirit of the law and is essential for continuing the cooperation and commitment to accommodating the full range of complex and important interests in matters related to California water.

NOTE: S. 612, approved December 16, was assigned Public Law No. 114–322.

Categories: Bill Signings and Vetoes : Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act, signing statement.

Subjects: American Indians and Alaska Natives : Land trust and property rights, strengthening efforts; California : Severe drought, damage and recovery efforts; Environment : Water management policy, improvement efforts; Legislation, enacted : Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act; Michigan : Contaminated tap water in Flint.

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