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DROUGHT

W A T E R

B A N K



THE 1991 DROUGHT WATER BANK

were initially assumed to require irrigation during the winter due to extremely dry conditions in December 1990 and January and February 1991.

SWRCB: The State Water Resources Control Board is responsible for administration of appropriative water rights within the State. Petitions for changes in point of diversion, purpose, or place of use of a post-1914 appropriative right must be approved by the Board before water can be transferred. In addition, the Board is responsible for Delta water quality standards contained in Decision 1485, which affects both the CVP and DWR. DWR reported to the Board on the proposed operation of the SWP and the Water Bank. Two Water Bank transfers, releases from storage in facilities of Yuba County Water Agency (New Bullards Bar Reservoir) and Oroville-Wyandotte Irrigation District, received Board approvals for changes in place of use.

DFG: One of the Governor's purposes in establishing the Water Bank was the protection of fish and wildlife and their habitat. Five years of drought had placed considerable stress on much of the Central Valley's wildlife. The winter-run chinook salmon, which had been placed on the federal endangered species list, was a particular concern. Additional concerns were Central Valley wildlife refuges and Delta fisheries. DWR cooperated with the Department of Fish and Game to minimize the impacts to fish and wildlife from the drought and SWP operations. This cooperative effort resulted in significant modifications to SWP operation, including Water Bank transfers. For example, one priority for the Bank was to keep water in Shasta Reservoir for temperature control for the 1991 fall- and winter-run salmon, as well as a contingency supply for 1992.

DFG worked on several proposals to provide additional water to Central Valley refuges in the fall. The Yuba County Water Agency transfer from New Bullards Bar included 28,000 acre-feet of water, at a reduced cost, to DFG for fish and wildlife uses at Graylodge, Los Banos, Volta, and Mendota wildlife management areas.

Local Government: Concern over impacts to local economies and water resources were expressed in many areas affected by Drought Water Bank operations. Considerable effort was and is being made to evaluate those concerns.

Impacts on ground water resources generated concern in both Yolo and Butte counties. Yolo County relies heavily on ground water. The Yolo Bypass area also has a documented problem of subsidence, which caused concern about flood protection. To help alleviate these concerns, a monitoring program was established to study water levels and quality, aquifer characteristics, and subsidence. The program, specified in a Memorandum of Understanding between the Conaway Conservancy Group and Yolo County, was jointly funded by the Water Bank and the water sellers. The contract also provided for reimbursement to the sellers for a 2 percent payment to Yolo County on contracts involving any transfer of ground water. Funds generated by this fee will be used to update the county's water plan. The data compiled as part of the monitoring program will also be valuable in gaining a better understanding of the area's long-term ground water resources.

Butte County also expressed concern over the impacts to the ground water resources within the county. DWR agreed to help fund the county's water plan development through similar 2 percent payments for contracts involving ground water within the county.