

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife  
October 20, 2021 Oversight Hearing:  
“Colorado River Drought Conditions and Response Measures – Day Two.”  
Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Patrick O’Toole  
Answers from Patrick O’Toole 11/9/2021

**Question from Rep. Jim Costa (CALIFORNIA)**

In the hearing, I asked about how repairing conveyance infrastructure in other basins outside of the Colorado River could benefit management of the Colorado River but also the State Water Project and Central Valley Project. Since we had limited time in the hearing, I would like to give you the opportunity to provide written responses to this question:

**Could you explain how improving or repairing conveyance infrastructure in basins outside of the Colorado River could help with regards to managing the Colorado River’s demands?**

**Answer**

Thank you for this question, Rep. Costa. We appreciate your long-time support for irrigated agriculture in the Central Valley and throughout the West.

Colorado River Basin management actions are interconnected with federal water management decisions made in both tributary and adjacent river basins. Millions of people in southern California rely upon multiple sources for their water, including State Water Project (SWP) supplies from Northern California and surface water from the Colorado River. Restrictions on other non-connected water sources can limit opportunities to manage Colorado River water more effectively in a drought. The direct consequence of the lack of northern California water to Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) will impact the demands and reliance on its Colorado River supplies and is the most prominent modern-day example of this larger-scale policy influence.

Interestingly, while the linkage between California’s Bay-Delta and much of the West should be obvious given daily headlines, many in California do not see the connection. To fix the larger problem facing the entire region, California has to resolve the Bay-Delta issues that impact Central Valley Project (CVP) deliveries to our agricultural water users, and SWP deliveries to customers like MWD, the largest supplier of treated water in the United States. That includes modernizing and repairing the conveyance facilities that carry SWP water to Southern California.

CVP and SWP water conveyance facilities also provide management flexibility and allow water to be transferred efficiently around the Valley and to other parts of the state. Unfortunately, subsidence caused by increased groundwater pumping has significantly impacted the carrying capacity of those conveyance systems. That additional groundwater use is happening in large part because Bay-Delta management of CVP and SWP surface water has reallocated that once-reliable supply to other uses. As water supply reliability from the Bay-Delta becomes more uncertain, Southern California municipal and industrial users will increasingly focus on the Colorado River and their other supply sources to meet their demands.

Fixing and modernizing those large CVP and SWP conveyance facilities in the San Joaquin Valley helps water users in Southern California, the Central Valley and the Colorado River Basin.