



The Honorable Cliff Bentz  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and  
Fisheries  
Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Jared Huffman  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and  
Fisheries  
Committee on Natural Resources

April 25, 2023

Dear Chair Bentz and Ranking Member Huffman,

On behalf of Audubon California, I write to oppose H.R. 215, submitted by Representative Valadao (CA-22). H.R. 215 undermines state law and prolongs old water conflicts in California when we should be focused on finding collaborative solutions that improve our state's resilience to drought while protecting people, wildlife, and our economy. Therefore, **I urge you to oppose H.R. 215.**

Audubon California represents over 118,000 members and 48 affiliated chapters in the state and works with a broad range of partners and stakeholders that includes landowners, farmers, ranchers, and community-based organizations. Together, we develop solutions to protect birds and the resources they need while supporting thriving communities. Audubon California works throughout the state with a special focus on the habitats birds need most because bird populations have been in significant decline for decades, with many species being pushed closer to extinction due to habitat loss, drought, and climate change.

In the Central Valley, California has already lost more than 90 percent of its wetlands, resulting in steep population declines for many species of waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wetland-dependent birds. This bill would unfairly reduce payments into the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) Restoration Fund by falsely deeming it to be "complete." Doing so would significantly hinder federal and state efforts to maintain necessary habitat and water supplies for endangered fish and vulnerable bird species on the Pacific Flyway. By undermining important conservation efforts, H.R. 215 sets the table for more conflicts and litigation over California's water management when we should be focused on finding lasting solutions. Therefore, **I urge you to oppose H.R. 215.**

H.R. 215 also overrides state law to authorize and appropriate funding for the enlargement of Shasta Dam, which would harm sacred sites of the Winnemem Wintu Tribe, as well as native fish and wildlife populations and economic activities associated with the fisheries. Audubon California joins the State of California in opposing raising Shasta Dam. H.R. 215 perpetuates and compounds on injustices perpetrated on the Winnemem Wintu Tribe and many other Indigenous People in California who have already lost access to so many sacred sites and important cultural resources like salmon. As Members of Congress, you have an opportunity to

continue this cycle of injustice or to break it. **I urge you to consider the Tribe's position and oppose H.R. 215.**

Finally, H.R. 215 would override the Endangered Species Act and reinstate former biological opinions that were issued by the previous Administration and found inadequate in federal court. Doing so not only circumvents sound science, the will of the State of California, and the findings of the court, it would also negatively impact the already suffering West Coast salmon fisheries in California and Oregon, which support thousands of jobs and other economic activities.

Overall, H.R. 215 would impose short-sighted water policies that will harm California's rich biodiversity, tribes, and communities. The bill rejects sound science while California's species, communities, and future generations pay the price. For the birds and communities we represent throughout California, I urge you to **oppose H.R. 215.**

Sincerely,

Mike Lynes  
Director of Public Policy  
Audubon California