

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 1, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth  
Secretary, Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

As the breadbasket of the world, water is essential to California's thriving agricultural economy and is critical in the daily lives of all Californians. Thus, I write with great concern regarding the recent unplanned water releases from Terminus Dam at Lake Kaweah and Schafer Dam at Lake Success by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

President Trump's most recent Executive Orders pertaining to California water falsely link statewide policies regarding the operations of the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project with the recent wildfires in Los Angeles. Furthermore, the two rivers by which Terminus Dam and Schafer Dam feed into, the Kaweah River and the Tule River, do not flow into Los Angeles. An unscheduled release of water at this time of year, when there is little demand for irrigation water and a snowpack that is below average, poses grave threats to a reliable water supply this year. In addition, this could increase the cost of water for farmers for this crop year exponentially due to dry conditions anticipated.

Unilateral actions like this can seriously harm the work that has been undertaken to increase sustainability and resiliency amidst the worsening effects of climate change. California's water challenges require that we work together to ensure that we are adequately prepared for more consistent extreme weather events and prolonged periods of drought. These actions are even more concerning as I have heard from my constituents — including Central Valley farmers and experienced water managers — that there was very little notice regarding the release of this water. A lack of notice has a major potential to not only rapidly deplete the supply behind Terminus Dam and Schafer Dam but also could overwhelm and flood downstream communities.

Efforts over the past few years have helped shape a more reliable and resilient supply of water in California. To ensure this work continues, I urge you to engage with federal, state, and local officials in a more close and transparent manner. By working together, we can ensure that there is an adequate and balanced supply of water to meet agricultural, environmental, and drinking water needs. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter, timing right now is critical so not to lose any potential water supply for this crop year.

Sincerely,



Rep. Jim Costa (CA-21)