

# eWATERLINE

APRIL 2023

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



**Jason Phillips**  
Chief Executive Officer

I was honored to be invited to testify before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries recently. Below is a part of my testimony.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the subcommittee today. From my perspective, working on a daily basis with the over 15,000 family farms and growers in the Friant Division, the simple reality is that operating a farm and growing food for our nation continues to be more and more difficult every year. While there are many contributing factors that add to the complexity of feeding America, the sad truth is that some of these factors we can control, yet for reasons I can't fully fathom, decision makers choose not to do so.

First, I want to underscore the critical importance of maintaining our country's food security and locally sourced foods. The multiple-year drought we have faced here in California and in many parts of the West – coupled with other domestic and global developments – has already affected the availability and price of food for many Americans. Rising food prices and global hunger are linked to the war in Ukraine, extreme climate events like the Western U.S. drought, and other global stressors.

The Western U.S., including the Central Valley of California, is a critical part of what has long been a proud national agricultural powerhouse, where our country consistently has run an agricultural trade surplus. But in 2019, for the first time in more than 50 years, the U.S. agriculture system ran an agricultural trade deficit, importing more than it exported. The USDA forecasts the U.S. will again run a deficit in 2023 for the third time since 2019. This

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## FEDS TOP OFF WATER ALLOCATIONS FOR CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT

By Danielle Gutierrez, Reprinted from The Sun-Gazette

TULARE COUNTY - Record rain and snowfall from winter storms have left Central Valley Project contractors with their glasses half full this year – and on the Friant Water Authority's count, graciously so.

[Click here to read the full interview](#)

Just over a month after some conservative water allotments were announced for Central Valley Project (CVP) contractors, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) reported an increase in water allocations on March 28. Johnny Amaral, chief operating officer and head of external affairs for Friant Water Authority, said this year is shaping up to be historic in terms of rainfall and snowpack. "This is one of those years where the biggest problem to deal with is what to do with all the water," Amaral said. "It's just one of those things; we'd much rather have to deal with this type of situation than the alternative, which is drought."

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**MAY 15**

FWA Executive Committee Meeting  
Lindsay, CA

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**MAY 22**

FWA Finance Committee Meeting  
Lindsay, CA

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**MAY 25**

FWA Board of Directors Meeting  
Visalia, CA

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**JUN 12**

FWA Executive Committee Meeting  
Lindsay, CA

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growing deficit is driven primarily by our dependence on imported Mexican fruits and vegetables. Increased reliance on foreign food has never been a policy our Nation has intentionally embraced in the past, but as water availability continues to shrink in the Central Valley, more and more food historically produced here will need to come from somewhere else or not be available at all.

Managing water for multiple benefits has long been a top goal for water managers across the West. For many years, a primary purpose of Bureau of Reclamation projects was to capture mountain snowmelt, store it, and distribute it during the long, dry summer months of the West, primarily to irrigated lands that produced food and fiber. Generations ago, these leaders had the wisdom and vision to plan, design and construct a water delivery system meant to level out the variability in California's hydrology by capturing and storing water in the wet years for use in the dry years. And for many years, this system has worked. But over the past few decades, due to decisions to prevent the ability of the system to function combined with the inability to take necessary action to improve it, the water system is now failing us.

Take this year for example: due to a lack of new or expanded water storage facilities, the incredible hydrology we have been blessed with will simply waste away downstream, causing floods and wreaking havoc on our communities, bridges and roads while flowing to the ocean. Instead, had we collectively taken the bold steps to capture more of this water whether in new facilities, expanded facilities, and in aquifers underground, not only would we be experiencing less flood damage, but we would be able to store water for future use.

Unfortunately, this is not a one-year malaise. Instead, the situation we find ourselves in has been caused by over 30 years of decisions by state and federal agencies that are not based on any new laws or definitive science. These decisions have been taking water away from farms and communities in increasing quantities yet have done nothing to help change the decline in environmental conditions. But these decisions continue to be undertaken, in many instances, because unelected agency staff continue to be delegated the responsibility for being the final decisionmakers on probably the most significant public policy issue we face in the state of California: how to best manage the state's limited water resources. And to add insult to injury, despite all of the water that has been reallocated for the benefit of the environment, many of our listed species are worse off now than ever, and native species and migratory birds dependent on the Pacific Flyway are struggling to survive as water is diverted away from refuges and important habitat provided by agriculture.

California currently uses more water every year than is sustainably available. Bold, common-sense action is needed now to avoid a crisis. The current patchwork of laws enacted to solve this problem and avoid a crisis are not working. Without additional action by Congress, failure is guaranteed and California's environment and economy will never be what it was or what people want it to be.

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As the snowpack begins to melt and run off into the water reservoirs with the warming season, Amaral said water contractors like the Friant Division are making sure to move every drop of water they can from Millerton Lake through the Friant-Kern Canal and the Madera Canal. Right now, he confirmed that USBR, which owns and operates the Friant Dam, is releasing about 9,000 cubic feet per second (CFS) – which accounts for the water's volume and speed – down the San Joaquin River. Although that water is lost to the eastern Valley once it's released, Amaral also confirmed that this loss is necessary, because the watermasters at the dam are accounting for 15,000 CFS of inflow pouring into the reservoir due to runoff from snow melt. However, despite the record amount of water that has come in recently and increased allocations, Amaral noted that California could easily experience a water shortage once more if it faces another dry year. "Yes, mother nature did her job," Amaral said. "But if next year is a dry year, we're right back into the cycle of drought."

According to Amaral, the drought experienced by California has been referenced as a "regulatory" or a "man made" drought because of state regulation. When the federal CVP was initially designed about 100 years ago, he noted that it was made to withstand five consecutive years of drought. However, with all of the regulations, litigation and decisions made since then, especially within the last 30 years, he said the state can't even make it through a full year of drought. "We can't have this feast or famine type situation in California and expect to be able to plan for the future," Amaral said. "That has to be fixed to where we can comfortably rely on a certain allocation, regardless of hydrology."

## 2023 WATER WARRIOR AWARD

2022 Friant Water Warrior award recipient, Eric Limas, General Manager for Lower Tule River ID, Tea Pot Dome WD, and Pixley ID said that he couldn't think of a better choice for the Award this year considering the role Mr. Amaral has played in the FKC middle reach capacity correction project which continues to move forward. He also said that Mr. Amaral represents the passion, knowledge and disposition of all past and future Water Warriors. The Water Warrior Award is generally handed down to those general managers who deliver water to the Friant Division farmers and has only been handed to non-manger's a handful of times.



Johnny Amaral & Eric Limas with Award

Current laws guiding water decisions, enacted decades ago, have been interpreted to almost unilaterally optimize water for just a small subset of the environment, not for all beneficial uses. It is way past time for those elected to represent the people of the state to provide fresh direction that is clear on how to interpret environmental regulations, clear on who the final decision-makers should be on these multi-generational decisions on how to prioritize our water resources; and provide the tools needed to be successful. Water managers need to be provided the laws and resources necessary to plan for the future so that when the next big water year is upon us, we can capture and store for later the water that is currently causing such damage to our communities.

Additionally, as a member of the board for the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley, a regional collaboration focused on water solutions, we must work together toward identifying and implementing real progress on projects for the vibrant communities that make up California's Central Valley. And we will need your help to ensure that these communities can enjoy reliable, clean drinking water and realize the full benefit of some of the most productive agricultural land in the world.

With this backdrop, we stand prepared to work with the Subcommittee and the federal and state administrations to put common sense back into the equation regarding effective management of our water resources. I believe FWA is particularly well positioned to provide technical, policy, and legal input to decisionmakers at all levels of government.



# FRIANT WATER AUTHORITY 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

APRIL 13, 2023

After a three-year hiatus, FWA held the return of this event on April 13 at the Watermill Grove in Visalia. The event included special guest U.S Congressman David G. Valadao and State Senator Melissa Hurtado. Thanks to all those in attendance!



# FRIANT-KERN CANAL MIDDLE REACH CAPACITY CORRECTION CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS UPDATE

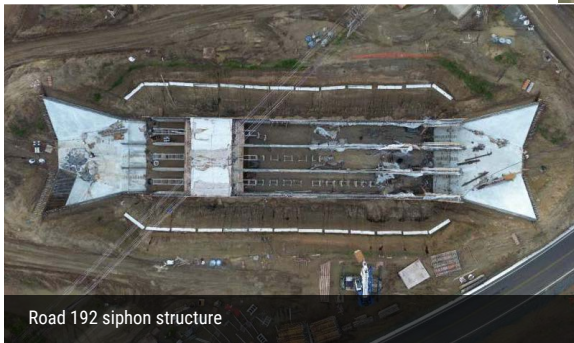
Construction Progress Report through March 31, 2023. Summary of Work Accomplished: The Contractor has worked 450 calendar days as of March 25th. Turnout work continued, with work being conducted at Casa Blanca, Teapot Dome, and SID-S1 turnouts. A severe storm system swept through the project area in early March and caused flooding at several locations. The Deer Creek work area was significantly impacted, with multiple berm breaches contributing to flooding at the site.



Ave. 95 siphon (Terra Bella) excavation and adjacent canal embankment.



Ave. 88 roadway replacement at new siphon



Road 192 siphon structure



Casa Blanca turnout formwork in progress



Deer Creek work area site flooding (view looking to the north)

## IN THE NEWS

"Upper Colorado River states add muscle as decisions loom on the shrinking river's future," Western Water, Apr. 21.

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"Storms cost Sacramento millions. Here's why atmospheric rivers may become more expensive," CapRadio, Apr. 25.

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"New methods emerging for water management in California," California WaterBlog, Apr. 1.

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"Congressman Jim Costa introduces bill to restore California's San Joaquin Valley Canals," Sierra Sun Times, Apr. 4.

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"Costa introduces legislation to repair major California canals. The Fresno lawmaker wants to deliver badly-needed dollars to restore capacity for key waterways," SJV Sun, Apr. 4.

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"Perspectives on DiaryMAR," California WaterBlog, Apr. 9.

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