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Statement from Friant Water Authority Chief Executive Officer Jason Phillips on the State of California's Incidental Take Permit for Operating the State Water Project:

“Yesterday, for the first time in history, the State of California announced it is issuing a separate incidental take permit for operating the State Water Project that is inconsistent with the federal biological opinions finalized just over a month ago,” said Jason Phillips, Chief Executive Officer of the Friant Water Authority. “This outcome is beyond disappointing. The federal biological opinions were developed by career federal scientists using the best available information in a manner that was open, transparent, and shared with state agencies throughout the more than three-year process to develop them,” Phillips continued. “While we are still evaluating the full impact of the state's permit, we fear the inconsistency with the federal opinion and the failure to acknowledge the best available science will throw California’s water operations into a tailspin, causing unnecessary disruptions to the operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project. It’s very difficult to envision a path forward that doesn’t include litigation, public bickering and finger-pointing, and water shortages and uncertainty for family farms, disadvantaged communities, and municipalities throughout the San Joaquin Valley and elsewhere in California. This action will reduce an already scarce water supply for the Valley at a time when experts predict shortfalls will force a million acres of productive farmland into retirement as we comply with state groundwater regulations. Friant continues to believe that a constructive dialogue based on sound science is the most productive way to secure sufficient water supplies for all Californians while protecting the environment we share. Unfortunately, this state permit does not make progress towards that goal.”