

# eWATERLINE

MAY 2021

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



**Jason Phillips**  
Chief Executive Officer

From time to time, the Friant Water Authority is asked to provide expert testimony at various Congressional and State Legislative hearings and forums. One such opportunity arose recently when I was asked to participate as a key witness at a Western Water Forum hosted by the Congressional Republicans in Washington, DC. Each Member of Congress that participated was allowed to invite ONE witness to testify, and I am thankful to Congressman Devin Nunes for the invitation and the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Friant Water Authority. As you know from previous issues of the Friant eWaterline, press releases, and public comments, we speak out regularly about water supply and operations, and the laws and regulations that create water shortages for farms and the communities that rely on surface and groundwater to sustain life. Unfortunately, it happens far too often, especially in the last decade. During a dry year like 2021, there is a heightened sense of concern from policy makers, the media, and the public wondering why and how California's water supply and delivery system isn't quite getting the job done. But after 30 years of laws, regulations, decisions, and misplaced priorities have plagued the water delivery system in the Golden State, it really shouldn't be a surprise to anyone who asks why the state finds itself in yet another water crisis. As Rep. Tom McClintock said during the forum, "Droughts are mother nature's fault, but water shortages are man's fault."

Below is a small excerpt from my testimony before the Members of Congress at the Western Water Forum.

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## THE WATERING HOLE PODCAST EPISODE 2, FEATURING MATT LEIDER, NOW AVAILABLE

The second episode of Friant Water Authority's (FWA) new podcast, "The Watering Hole", hosted by Johnny Amaral, Chief of External Affairs of FWA is now available on the [FWA YouTube Channel](#), [Apple](#), [Spotify](#), [Google](#), and [Podbean](#).

Matt Leider is a FWA board member representing Tea Pot Dome Water District and is also Vice President of Laux Management, Inc.



**THE WATERING HOLE PODCAST** with JOHNNY AMARAL

**EPISODE 2**

**SPECIAL GUEST**  
**MATT LEIDER**  
Vice President, Laux Management Inc.

**HOST**  
**JOHNNY AMARAL**

In this episode, Johnny and Matt dive into California's outdated water policies, possible solutions, and discuss Jason Phillips' testimony during the Western Water Forum.

## JASON PHILLIPS PROVIDES EXPERT TESTIMONY AT CONGRESSIONAL HEARING

At the request of California Congressman Devin Nunes, FWA CEO Jason Phillips spoke at a Western Water Forum hosted by Congressional Republicans. The entire forum may be viewed on the House Committee on Natural Resources GOP [YouTube channel](#). Use the links below to jump to the specific segments for Congressman Devin Nunes and Jason Phillips.



**REP. DEVIN NUNES**

SEGMENT BEGINS AT 37:10

**JASON PHILLIPS**

SEGMENT BEGINS AT 42:12

## EVENTS AROUND THE VALLEY

**JUNE 14**

FWA Executive Committee Meeting

Lindsay, CA

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**JUNE 21**

FWA Finance Committee Meeting

Lindsay, CA

[CLICK FOR INFO ▶](#)

**JUNE 24**

FWA Board of Directors Meeting

Visalia, CA

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**JULY 19**

FWA Finance Committee Meeting

Lindsay, CA

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We will continue to provide the voice on behalf of the Friant Division and the communities on the eastside of the Valley, and it will always be the truth, no matter how uncomfortable it may be.

*"My name is Jason Phillips, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Friant Water Authority in California's San Joaquin Valley. The Friant Water Authority (Authority or Friant) is a public agency formed under California law in part to operate and maintain the Friant-Kern Canal, a component of the Central Valley Project (CVP) owned by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). In addition to that responsibility, the Authority also advocates on behalf of the entire Friant Division and eastside communities for sound public policy on water management and operations. For more than 30 years, most decisions made, and actions taken in Washington, DC and Sacramento, CA have made the impacts of drought even worse, and have turned a water storage and delivery system, which was once the envy of the world, into a confusing mess of regulations, laws, and contradictions. Our forefathers had the wisdom and vision to design and construct a water delivery system that could withstand FIVE consecutive years of drought. Now, after ONE or TWO years, the system is in a tailspin and unable to live up to its needs. At some point, if common sense doesn't take over, the past will become the permanent future and implementing sensible solutions will be too late for too many people, cities, and farms in the Valley.*

*Thank you to Congressman Devin Nunes for inviting me to speak. Friant is particularly well positioned to comment on the topic of this hearing, given: (1) our role as the local operator and responsible agency for the Friant-Kern Canal, and (2) the significant water-related challenges Friant and others face in the San Joaquin Valley (Valley) and elsewhere in California, especially during a severe drought year like 2021 is shaping up to be."*

Jason Phillips, CEO, Friant Water Authority

## IN THE NEWS

"After much prodding, Newsom declares statewide drought emergency, \$5.1bil in spending," *The SJV Sun* (May 10, 2021)

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"Water in shorter supply than ever, Calif. reps takes aim at state's poor policies on Capitol Hill," *The SJV Sun* (May 19, 2021)

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"In rare showing, Valley lawmakers ramp up drought pressure on Newsom," *The SJV Sun* (Apr. 30, 2021)

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"Careful what you wish for with Calif. drought emergency," *The SJV Sun* (May 11, 2021)

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## STATEMENT FROM FRIANT WATER AUTHORITY ON 2021 DROUGHT OPERATIONS

Recent actions by the State Water Resources Control Board, Bureau of Reclamation, and California Department of Water Resources to adjust operations for the historic low water available in the Central Valley – including approval of the Temporary Urgency Change Permit, the Shasta Temperature Management Plan, and the Drought Operations Plan – are all critical in establishing an updated operations plan for 2021 to best meet multiple beneficial uses in the Central Valley and throughout California. Although the Friant Water Authority team is still evaluating certain details, the actions and decisions this week appear to be consistent with the recent operations plans and assumptions that we have discussed with Federal and State partners and other water agencies, which will preserve the current limited Class 1 allocation and prevent the potentially disastrous action of releasing water from Friant Dam this summer to meet the Exchange Contract requirements.

Especially in a year such as this, any further reductions in the Friant Division's water allocation will worsen the drought's effects in the San Joaquin Valley by reducing the amount of surface water delivered for irrigation and groundwater recharge. The Friant service area includes more than 55 disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged communities that are almost entirely reliant on groundwater wells for their supplies. Additionally, it could reduce the cold-water pool behind Friant Dam through the fall months, increasing temperature-dependent mortality of the spawning population of Spring-run chinook salmon that was established by the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement and Program.

It is important to recognize that the dry hydrologic conditions this year puts us in unprecedeted territory, particularly in Northern California, which adds to the uncertainty of water availability forecasts and could mean this estimated outlook for water supply could still change as the year progresses. As such, Friant Water Authority will continue working with our California water community to reduce the risk of further impacts to the Friant Division's water supply this year, and we are grateful for the close coordination occurring that facilitates a shared, transparent vision for weathering the hydrologic challenges of 2021.

## UPDATE ON FKC CAPACITY CORRECTION PROJECT

The following is a summary of the design, permitting, and regulatory work completed by the FWA project team in recent months.

2019												2020				2021			
12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	Q2			
● 12/2/19 NOI/NOP Published					● 5/8/20 NOA/Draft EIS/EIR Published				● 9/18/20 Final NOA / FEIS/EIR Published							TBD ●			
	● 1/28/20 Feasibility Report provided to OMB						● 7/13/20 Biological Opinion Issued			● 10/22/20 FWA Certification of EIR						Issue Solicitation for Bids			
		● 2/24/20 30-Percent Design Report - Final								● 10/23/20 NOD Published						Award Construction Contract			
										● 10/27/20 ROD Approval/Signature						TBD ○			
										● 11/30/20 Project Section 106 Complete									

The following is a summary of the funding options and benchmarks that the FWA project team are pursuing to piece together a final finance plan.

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	STATUS
Bureau of Reclamation SJR Restoration Program	\$41.8 m	Confirmed/In-hand
Bureau of Reclamation SJR Restoration Program	\$9 m	Requested
WIIN Act FY18 and FY20 Appropriations	\$4.55 m	Awaiting Congressional Action
WIIN Act FY21 Trump Administration funding request	\$206 m	Signed by President Trump
State funding (SB 559 – Hurtado)	<\$308 m	Passed by State Senate-May 2021
Groundwater Sustainability Agency mitigation funding	\$125 m	Agreement Finalized
Friant contractor funding	\$50 m	Confirmed/Committed