For presentation to the Joint Hearings of the California Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife, and the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Wildlife -- Water Development and Flood Control

This statement is submitted in behalf of the San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Users Association. The association membership includes 36 irrigation and water districts located primarily on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley and extending from Antioch to Kettleman City. The association is interested in and vitally concerned with all aspects of water development.

In the absence of effective and reliable means for weather modification, flood control efforts must be confined largely to somewhat limited mechanical methods. Those that are most effective involve:

1. means by which surplus or excessive watershed runoff and surface streamflow can be captured in reservoirs and catchment basins and held for carefully managed releases when and as downstream channel capacities can safely accommodate them;

2. means for diversion of excessive stream-flows into established off-stream flood-ways or by-passes; and

3. within fairly narrow limits, diversion of excessive stream-flows into established irrigation canal systems as water spreading devices.

Of these methods for controlling floods flows, the most effective is reservoir storage, coupled with watershed and
reservoir management which coordinates runoff forecasts; main-
tains adequate, vacant, reservoir storage space within physical
limits; and schedules reservoir releases to alleviate or elimi-
nate flood damage.

Virtually all western reservoirs contributing to flood
control are in fact multiple-purpose facilities. That is, they
were planned, authorized, constructed, and are operated under
multiple purpose criteria which may include two or more of the
following functions: irrigation, municipal and industrial water
supply, flood control, hydro-electric power production, fish
and wildlife mitigation or enhancement, recreation, water quality
control, and navigation.

Obviously, these enumerated functions are not all mutually
beneficial nor compatible. The flood control function standing
alone would benefit most by maintaining maximum vacant storage
space to protect against the extremes of nature's unpredictable
vagaries of precipitation. The irrigation function standing
alone would lean toward capturing all allowable reservoir inflows
to maximize water storage to meet current agricultural needs and
protect against unpredictable drought. Hydro-power interests
would like to schedule power generation to maximize production
and income. Recreationists usually prefer stabilized reservoir
levels, and fishermen favor regulated, adequate downstream flows
to facilitate fish production and angling success. Almost all
interests want adequate water quality as required for their par-
ticular purposes; however, the quality parameters for the diverse
functions are not necessarily uniform.
 Costs of the flood control function has traditionally been a general obligation and not reimbursable by the direct beneficiaries. Costs of the functions related to instream water uses except for hydro-power, have also been wholly or substantially non-reimbursable. However, the capital costs of facilities for irrigation, municipal and industrial water supply, and hydro-power generation have traditionally been fully reimbursable by the functional direct beneficiaries either separately or jointly. Power and M&I water supply costs are interest bearing while irrigation costs may be interest free or interest bearing depending on how and by whom the costs are financed.

The general objective of all prevailing water development projects in the West has been to provide multiple benefits to people, directly and indirectly, socially and economically, and in so doing to enhance western and national stability and prosperity. In virtually all cases, existing projects have become in total more valuable and successful with time. The opinion and philosophical differences which prevail between and among various interest groups relate primarily to the degree of emphasis placed on each of the functions that each project can serve.

Thus it is obvious that some give-and-take among knowledgeable people is essential if they are to reach agreement on acceptable development and management criteria which become matters of issue in almost all proposals for water resource development in today's world.
The State of California has amply available water supplies within its borders to more than satisfy all of its current and long-range legitimate needs—both consumptive and non-consumptive. However, nature seldom provides its bounty in the right places, at the right times, and in the right amounts to satisfy the wide variety of functions and uses required by man and nature. In this light, if we are to meet growing needs of expanding populations, and a correspondingly expanded economy, along with justifiable protection and preservation of the environment, it becomes the responsibility of man, in exercising his dominion over the earth and the resources thereof, to seek common ground among divergent interests in his efforts to cope with and facilitate progress.

In the opinion of the San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Users Association, it is both possible and essential that our government leaders recognize their opportunities and responsibilities to support justifiable needed water development programs for development of the State's bountiful resources in ways that will adequately serve man and nature currently and in perpetuity.

It is urged that the committees and membership of the State Senate and the Assembly approach each of the many water development issues on which they must act, with open-mindedness in diligently searching for and evaluating well-balanced factual information pertaining to needs, benefits, and impacts of each proposal and related issue.

We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to express our views at this hearing.