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Congress of the United States
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COMMITTEE ON
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AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

March 20, 2015

Commissioner Estevan Lopez
Bureau of Reclamation
US Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW, Room 7545
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Dear Commissioner Lopez:

Thank you for taking my call today regarding your agency's threat to accelerate environmental water spills from the New Melones Reservoir in California.

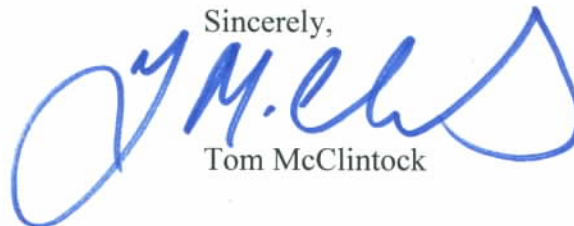
So that there is no possibility of misunderstanding, I want to put in writing what I told you on the phone – and in the strongest possible terms: the threatened release of water from the New Melones Dam for fish migration will have utterly catastrophic consequences to the thousands of residents who depend upon that water in the worst drought in the recorded history of California.

At the end of the rainy season in the fourth year of this ongoing drought, our snow pack is at 12 percent of normal and New Melones now holds just 25 percent of its normal capacity. For you to willfully release billions of gallons of water – when your agency has full discretion under current law whether to release it now – would be the most irresponsible act you could possibly make in your capacity.

I was stunned by your admission that you had not spoken with the Oakdale Irrigation District and were unaware of its prediction that this action will take the New Melones Reservoir to dead pool by August. I was even more stunned when you told me you were too busy to discuss it with their general counsel, Tim O'Laughlin. I appreciate your taking his number, and can only pray that you personally consult him before making so devastating a decision.

As an individual member of Congress, I cannot stop you from this fateful act. I can only express directly and unambiguously the consequences of it and to reiterate my warning to you: if you release this water for fish now and the human population of Copperopolis and surrounding communities runs dry as a result – it will be an entirely avoidable human tragedy of your own making.

Sincerely,



Tom McClintock