From:	Jason Peltier
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UNITED STATES CONGRESS NEWS RELEASE

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Feinstein, Boxer, Costa Call on President to Form Federal Drought Task Force

Urge Swift Action if State Requests Federal Disaster Declaration

Washington, DC- In light of California's extreme dry conditions, Senator Dianne Feinstein, Senator Barbara Boxer, and Congressman Jim Costa called on President Obama to form a federal drought task force capable of coordinating a swift, decisive cross-agency response to the state's looming water crisis. In a letter, the lawmakers also asked that the President move quickly to authorize a disaster declaration should California request a federal declaration. Last month, Costa and Feinstein urged California Governor Jerry Brown to declare a statewide drought emergency that would mobilize additional resources necessary to address the state's current water challenges.

Full text of the letter below:

January 16, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Pennsylvania Ave,
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are writing to urge you to take immediate action to address California's dire water supply conditions by directing the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Commerce and the Assistant Secretary of the Army to pursue all available strategies and actions to alleviate the impacts of the drought on Californians.

The precarious water supply situation in California cannot be overstated:

- Calendar year 2013 was the driest year on record for the State of California.
- Three years of dry conditions in California, coupled with 14 years of consecutive dry conditions in the Colorado River Basin, has depleted the carryover storage in reservoirs for the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project to historically low levels, below even the previous record low levels in 1977, the year of the last federal drought declaration.
- On November 20, 2013, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced the historically lowest initial State Water Project allocation of 5 percent for water year 2014.
- The United States Bureau of Reclamation has acknowledged that without significant precipitation, there may be a zero percent initial allocation for Central Valley Project South of Delta contractors.
- Most recently, on Friday, January 3rd, DWR performed a snowpack survey that showed the snowpack is approximately 20 percent of statewide average for this time of year, and only seven percent of statewide average peak snowpack.
- Water agencies across the state have begun issuing orders for mandatory water rationing.

We have ahead of us an incredible challenge that will require the highest levels of engagement and flexibility on the part of federal and state water and regulatory agencies in order to avoid devastating socioeconomic and environmental impacts to many regions of California, particularly to the agricultural heart of California, the Central Valley.

On December 17, 2013, Governor Brown convened a drought task force to develop strategies and to prioritize actions that state agencies can take to address the ongoing drought impacting our constituents. Federal agencies, backed by support from the White House, should ensure that they are doing all they can to coordinate and expand on all drought mitigation opportunities identified by the state agencies that involve federal authorities, in addition to the ongoing work by federal agencies to identify areas of flexibility within their own authorities.

We request that you immediately appoint a federal drought task force and appoint a federal drought coordinator to parallel efforts at the state level. The federal drought coordinator should be charged with coordinating actions and responses across federal agencies and coordinating with state agencies related to the drought conditions affecting California. The ongoing dry conditions call for immediate,

measurable actions from federal agencies to complement the work being done at the state level to address the water supply challenges that face California.

If California requests a broad federal disaster declaration, we urge you to issue this declaration as quickly as possible. We also urge that you direct the federal agencies to maximize opportunities for expedited water transfers, assist with infrastructure improvements, and exercise their discretion in regulatory decision-making within the confines of the law to deliver more water to those whose health and livelihoods depend on it.

Thank you for your continued efforts to work with us on solving California's water challenges. We look forward to your timely response to our request.

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