



**SAVE  
THE STAN**



**SOUTH SAN JOAQUIN  
IRRIGATION DISTRICT**

**Dec. 12, 2016**

**Contact:** Steve Knell, OID general manager, (209) 840-5508 or [srknell@oakdaleirrigation.com](mailto:srknell@oakdaleirrigation.com)  
Peter Rietkerk, SSJID general manager, (209) 249-4645 or [prietkerk@ssjid.com](mailto:prietkerk@ssjid.com)

## **Water bill passed by Congress great for the Stanislaus River**

Two Central California irrigation district general managers say the comprehensive water bill passed Saturday by the U.S. Senate is good news for those who want to increase the salmon population in the Stanislaus River.

Steve Knell of the Oakdale Irrigation District and Peter Rietkerk of the South San Joaquin Irrigation District oversee agencies with senior water rights on the river. They applauded Congress for its efforts to promote holistic drought solutions for the region.

The Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act features many elements intended to help increase water storage and availability in California. Key language encourages closer collaboration between the districts and the federal Bureau of Reclamation to optimize storage operations in New Melones Reservoir, which provides water supply and ecosystem enhancements on the Stanislaus River.

The bill includes the [Save our Salmon Act](#) introduced by 10<sup>th</sup> District Rep. Jeff Denham, R-Turlock, and passed in July by the House. It directs the National Marine Fisheries Service to work with OID and SSJID to reduce the threats posed to young salmon and steelhead trout by striped bass and other predators.

Research conducted by FISHBIO has shown that as many as 95% of young salmon are eaten by predators before they can make their way from the Stanislaus River and other Central Valley waterways through the Delta and into the ocean. FISHBIO's salmon count in the fall of 2015 revealed that most of the returning fish were from hatcheries and not native to the Stanislaus River. The company uses a weir that photographs and counts every fish in the river.

Rietkerk summed up the benefits afforded to the two districts by the bill. "As we need to continue to remind ourselves, predation control, habitat restoration and flows are all important to a healthy salmon population. It's not just flows, as the state is currently asserting."

Added Knell: "We believe passage of this legislation will allow the Stanislaus River to be a blueprint for how water management, resource management and fisheries management can collectively be combined to attain important regional solutions."

Rietkerk and Knell thanked Congressman Denham for his leadership on moving this important piece of legislation forward. Denham's 10<sup>th</sup> District includes all of Stanislaus County and a portion of San Joaquin County.

"The timing of these drought provisions is critical so our water system can capture and store desperately needed water," Denham said. "The regulatory flexibility of the provisions will benefit the Valley and allow our local districts to begin protecting our threatened salmon and steelhead from non-native predator fish and to allow for additional storage at New Melones Reservoir."

Before it takes effect, the bill still must be signed by President Obama.

---

**About Us:** The [South San Joaquin Irrigation District](#) was established in 1909 and is located in Manteca. It provides agricultural irrigation water to about 55,000 acres in Escalon, Ripon and Manteca. In 2005, the district expanded into providing domestic water service to selected cities within its territory. The [Oakdale Irrigation District](#) was created in 1909 and provides agricultural water to about 62,000 acres in northeastern Stanislaus County and southeastern San Joaquin County.

OID and SSJID hold senior water rights on the Stanislaus River. For more than 100 years, our agencies have responsibly delivered surface water to farms in San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties, and for SSJID, thousands of homes in San Joaquin County. We are committed to sensible water policies, innovative irrigation techniques, prudent conservation practices, and important investments in biological studies of the river and fish habitat.

Save the Stan is a public education effort by SSJID and OID to inform Californians about the threat posed by increased flows on the Stanislaus River. For more information, go to [www.savethestan.org](http://www.savethestan.org) or our [Facebook page](#).