

The Original Rule Was Intended To “Shorten And Streamline” Federal Land Use Planning While Being “More Transparent And Accessible”

A 2008 And 2009 Biological Opinion Found That The Central Valley Project And State Water Operations Would Threaten Endangered Species And “Destroy Or Adversely Modify” Critical Habitat. “The 2008 and 2009 BiOps found that the Central Valley Project and State Water Project operations would jeopardize the continued existence of listed species, including endangered Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon, threatened Delta smelt, and threatened Central Valley steelhead, and would destroy or adversely modify these species’ designated critical habitat.” [California Attorney General Xavier Becerra Press Release, accessed 10/07/20]

In 2019, The Fish And Wildlife Service Was Told To Prepare A New, More Limited Environmental Review Of The Shasta Dam. “This year the Interior Department’s Fish and Wildlife Service was told to prepare a new environmental review of the dam project, but this one will be much more limited in scope, according to a person familiar with the plans, who requested anonymity out of fear of retribution. The new plan would not analyze the effects on salmon habitat downstream or the effects on several rare species.” [New York Times, [09/28/19](#)]

The New Biological Opinion Weakened Protections For The Delta Smelt, Allowing Large Amounts Of Water To Be Diverted From The San Francisco Bay Delta. “The Trump administration on Tuesday moved to weaken protections for a threatened California fish, a change that would allow large amounts of water to be diverted from the San Francisco Bay Delta to irrigate arid farmland and could harm the region’s fragile ecosystem. The plan, which administration officials expect to be finalized in January, is a major victory for a wealthy group of California farmers that had lobbied to weaken protections on the fish, the delta smelt.... The new biological opinion concluded that those salmon and smelt would not be jeopardized by lifting the environmental protections and rerouting that water. Once finalized, the change propelled by the opinion would allow water to be diverted from fish to farms by the spring of 2020.” [New York Times, [10/22/19](#)]

Special Interests Supported The New Biological Opinion

The New Biological Opinion Was Favorable To The Westlands Water District, Whose Goal Was To Be Able To Divert Water.

Interior Secretary David Bernhardt Once Lobbied On Behalf Of The Westlands Water District, Who Represents About 1,000 Large Farmers And Whose Goal Was To Lift Environmental Protections To Divert Water. “From 2011 to 2016, [Current Interior Secretary David] Bernhardt lobbied on behalf of California’s Westlands Water District, a state-chartered organization representing about 1,000 large farmers in an area of central California the size of Rhode Island. During those years, Westlands, which was his largest client, paid Mr. Bernhardt’s firm \$1.3 million. The group’s chief lobbying goal was to lift federal environmental protections to allow California’s fickle water supply to be used consistently to irrigate Central Valley almond, pistachio and cotton farms.” [New York Times, [10/22/19](#)]

- **Bernhardt “Pressed Congress” To Pass Legislation To Weaken Endangered Species Protections On The Delta Smelt.** “As Westlands’ lawyer and lobbyist, Mr. Bernhardt pressed Congress for legislation to weaken Endangered Species Act protections on the delta smelt. He also joined a legal petition asking the Supreme Court to take up a case seeking to weaken those protections.” [New York Times, [10/22/19](#)]
- **Bernhardt Was A Lobbyist For The Farmers “Until Just Months Before He Joined The Trump Administration.”** “The plan, which administration officials expect to be finalized in January, is a major victory for a wealthy group of California farmers that had lobbied to weaken protections on the fish, the delta smelt. It also might intensify ethics questions about Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, who was the lobbyist for those farmers until just months before he joined the Trump administration.” [New York Times, [10/22/19](#)]

The Westlands Water District Spent \$400,000 In Lobbying Expenses For 2020

WWD Spent \$400,000 For Lobbying In 2020. [OpenSecrets.org – Lobbying Profile: Westlands Water District, accessed [11/18/20](#)]