

UNITED WATER PARTNERS WITH VENTURA COUNTY COALITION OF LABOR (CoLAB) IN SUPPORT OF EXPEDITING UNITED'S HABITAT PROTECTION PLAN TO GET PERMIT

Margaret Mead said: *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”*



In Ventura County, a small group of committed people came together in August to meet with representatives of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to encourage a firm commitment from NMFS to expedite work that will allow United Water Conservation District to obtain a long-desired permit for the Freeman Diversion project.

The Ventura County Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business (CoLAB) convened and led the meeting, which included over a dozen representatives from labor, business, agriculture, advocacy organizations, chambers of commerce and United Water Conservation District. The meeting was requested by CoLAB to better understand the significant delays and hurdles that have been experienced while trying to obtain a permit for United Water’s Freeman Diversion facility.

“The Oxnard Plain accounts for more than half the county’s irrigated cropland and at least a billion dollars’ worth of production each year. It’s entirely dependent on groundwater, and without the recharge made possible by United Water’s Freeman Diversion, a great deal of that production would vanish because there wouldn’t be the water to support it, commented John Krist, Executive Director of the Farm Bureau and a participant in the meeting with NMFS representatives. That means the growers have a huge vested interest in

the outcome of the negotiations over United’s habitat conservation plan and conditions placed by the regulatory agency on Freeman operations,” Krist continued.

“Two of the top NOAA Fisheries administrators looked us all in the eye and pledged to make resolving this situation a top priority for the agency. That means they’ve taken ownership of the process and the outcome, and I’m hopeful that after so many years of delay and obstructionism from NMFS staff in Southern California, we finally will see progress toward the approvals and permits United needs to carry out its mission,” continued Krist.

“Ventura County Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business (CoLAB) organized a diverse group of participants representing union laborers, farmers and ranchers, and county businesses that rely on water from United’s Freeman Diversion for their livelihoods” explains Lynn Gray Jensen, P.G., Executive Director, Ventura County Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business. CoLAB participants voiced legitimate concerns on the process and received constructive feedback from NOAA Fisheries administrators Barry Thom and Lisa Van Atta describing the path forward to the mutual goal of an approved Habitat Conservation Plan.



United Water has submitted its new Habitat Conservation Plan to National Marine Fisheries Service and looks forward to a productive and expeditious review process.