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Secretary Salazar and other Federal, State, Local Leaders Break Ground on Intertie Project to Improve Water Deliveries

Almost Half a Billion in American Recovery & Reinvestment Act Funds Spent Statewide to Help Alleviate California Water Crisis

TRACY, Calif. –Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar led a groundbreaking ceremony today for the Delta--Mendota Canal/California Aqueduct Intertie project, which will improve water supply reliability for locations south of the Delta when completed as expected by 2012.

At the event in Tracy, California, he was joined by Sen. Dianne Feinstein and a host of other federal, state and local leaders celebrating the start of construction of an underground link between the two Central Valley canals south of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

"Linking of these two canals by a new underground pipeline and pumping plant will improve water supply reliability in a part of California hardest hit by dry conditions and loss of jobs," the Secretary said. "Today's groundbreaking is historic. It not only represents the efforts of all the partners gathered here to help alleviate California's water crisis but also the timely action taken under President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to deliver water—and create jobs—while safeguarding the environment of the West."

Interior spent \$15.8 million of its ARRA funds for the completion of the Delta-Mendota Canal / California Aqueduct Intertie Project. CALFED funding for the Intertie is \$8.8 million. The remaining funding has come from contributed funds and Reclamation's Water and Related Resources funding. The total Intertie project cost is approximately \$28 million. The Secretary said that statewide California received a total of more than \$452 million in ARRA funding related to water.

Interior's Bureau of Reclamation, the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority and the California Department of Water Resources are partnering to construct the Delta-Mendota Canal/California Aqueduct Intertie.

In addition to Secretary Salazar, other speakers at the groundbreaking for the Delta-Mendota Canal/California Aqueduct Intertie included U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein and Congressmen Dennis Cardoza, Jim Costa, and Jerry McNerney. Secretary for Natural Resources Lester Snow represented the state of California. Mike Stearns, Chairman of the Board of the San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority, spoke on behalf of his agency. Numerous other dignitaries present also included Deputy Secretary of the Interior David J. Hayes; Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Mike Connor, members of the state legislature, leaders of local governments and irrigation districts.

A construction contract for the Intertie project was awarded to Shimmick Construction Co. of Oakland, California, in July 2010. The project will provide about 160 much-needed construction jobs in an area hard hit by drought and job loss.

The Secretary noted that statewide California received even more than anticipated in stimulus funding related to water. The addition of the Intertie to the initial list of ARRA projects brought the total spent on drought relief and large and small water infrastructure projects to \$288.6 million across the state. If that figure added to the \$163.9 million from the ARRA spent on Title XVI water recycling projects and water conservation challenge grants, a total of \$452.5 in stimulus funds went to California to help alleviate the water crisis while protecting the environment.

"We included the Delta-Mendota Project as a high priority action in the Interim Federal Action Plan for the Bay Delta and added Recovery Act funding for it because it is an excellent project that facilitates the smarter supply and use of Bay-Delta water," the Secretary noted.

Secretary Salazar said that the Intertie will potentially increase average annual deliveries to the Central Valley Project by as much as 35,000 acre-feet by addressing conveyance conditions in the Delta Mendota Canal that presently restrict use of the C. W. "Bill" Jones Pumping Plant near Tracy to less than its design capacity.

The Delta-Mendota Canal receives water pumped by the Jones plant and is the primary federal delivery facility sending water to Central Valley Project (CVP) contractors south of the Delta. The State Water Project's California Aqueduct operates in much the way. The connection between the two will improve overall water supply reliability.

The many other projects in the state for which Bureau of Reclamation stimulus funds have been or are being invested include the Red Bluff Diversion Dam to build a screened pumping plant to protect fish populations while delivering water to agricultural users; the Folsom Dam to address safety concerns and repair infrastructure; the Contra Costa Canal to protect water supplies for 500,000 Californians and build fish screens; the Trinity River to honor the Department of the Interior's responsibility to Native American tribes; and the Battle Creek Salmon/Steelhead

Restoration project, which will help restore fisheries that support thousands of jobs in northern California

“These investments under the ARRA represent only part of what Interior is doing in relation to California water,” the Secretary concluded. “Our people in the Bureau of Reclamation, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, and my office are working night and day on the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, on the new integrated science program that we and the Commerce Department are developing in response to the National Academy of Sciences Report, and on a host of other actions to improve and increase efficiencies in California’s water system, while also protecting the environment. We are in this for the long haul with our state partners and others—thanks to all of you.”

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