

It's not a room. It's a Residence.™

TOUR SUITES >



HOT TOPICS: NFL | CHINA | NCAA | BARACK OBAMA | MITT ROMNEY | REPUBLICAN PARTY | SUPREME COURT | SENATE

# The Washington Times



French classes provide way out of China



NEWS | OPINION | CAMPAIGN 2012 | SPORTS | BOOKS | LIFE | BLOGS | COMMUNITIES | MULTIMEDIA | Google™ Custom Search | Search

POLITICS | NATIONAL | WORLD | SECURITY | ECONOMY | D.C. LOCAL | NEWSMAKERS | Inside the Beltway | Inside the Ring | Pruden on Politics

HOME > NEWS > NATIONAL | RADIO | LOG IN | E-MAIL ALERTS | SUBSCRIBE | CLASSIFIEDS | E-EDITION | RSS

## It's farmers vs. fish for California water

By Valerie Richardson - The Washington Times

Thursday, August 20, 2009

Ads by Google

### Farmers & Ranchers

Since when did agriculture become a dirty word? Join the conversation.

[www.FoodDialogues.com](http://www.FoodDialogues.com)

### CA Fishing Locations

Find Fishing Locations in CA Search by Fish Species & More!

[CA.TakeMeFishing.org](http://CA.TakeMeFishing.org)

### FOLLOW US ON

FACEBOOK

Follow @washtimes

### QUESTION OF THE DAY

Will Rick Santorum or Newt Gingrich soon drop out of the GOP presidential race?

- Yes
- No
- Undecided
- Other

[Login to Vote](#)

[View results](#)

Supporters of California agriculture called on the Obama administration and California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Wednesday to lift water restrictions that were imposed to protect the endangered delta smelt, saying the fish is putting farmers out of business.

The Pacific Legal Foundation presented a "Save Our Water" petition with 12,000 signatures at a Sacramento news conference, calling on Mr. Schwarzenegger, a Republican, to request that the Obama administration convene the federal Endangered Species Committee, also known as the "God Squad," to remove the water curbs.

"California should be known for the Rose Bowl, not a dust bowl. But there's a danger of a dust bowl being created in the Central Valley by extreme [Endangered Species Act] regulations," said foundation President Rob Rivett. "Instead of stimulating jobs, federal environmental officials are turning recession into depression and stimulating economic hardship for businesses, farms and families."

State Rep. George Radanovich, a Republican from the hard-hit San Joaquin Valley, said that "when it comes to water policy, humans come before fish."

The God Squad is a rarely invoked but potentially powerful provision within the Endangered Species Act that lets the committee override species protections in cases of economic emergency.

During a trip to the Central Valley in June, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar appeared to reject the idea.

Convening the committee, Mr. Salazar said, "would be to admit failure, it would defeat ecosystem restoration efforts. It has been rarely invoked and usually leads to litigation," according to Aquaforia.com, a Web site on the state's water issues.

As a result, proponents of emergency action are urging Mr. Schwarzenegger to throw his clout behind the idea and make the request to the Interior Department on behalf of the state.

Lester Snow, director of the California Department of Water Resources, said the governor had sent requests for reconsultation on the smelt and chinook salmon to the Interior and Commerce departments.

"The governor would look at the God Squad as indication that the federal government isn't responding. It's an action of last resort," Mr. Snow said. "It rarely works the way anyone wants it to.

COMMENTS (29)

RECOMMEND

TWITTER

LINKEDIN

READ LATER

EMAIL

PRINT

TEXT SIZE: + | -

SHARE

AMERICAN EXPRESS® CARDMEMBER OFFER

**AEROSMITH**

THE GLOBAL WARMING TOUR!

Advance tickets now available for American Express Cardmembers.

GET TICKETS

AMERICAN EXPRESS

### YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE



Romney rivals seen 'tilting at windmills' in convention play

By Seth McLaughlin - The Washington Times



Mega Millions' \$500M lottery payout has players dreaming

By Meredith Somers - The Washington Times



Supreme Court split over scrapping entire health care law

By Paige Winfield Cunningham - The Washington Times

### IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



Mega Millions' \$500M lottery payout has players dreaming



EDITORIAL: Destroy all churches



Trayvon's wardrobe a hot-button topic in racial profiling de...



Republicans vote to subpoena oil moratorium documents

What the governor wants is a strong federal partner.”

Nobody doubts the economic devastation to the Central Valley. The unemployment rate in agriculture communities ranges from 20 percent to 40 percent, while 250,000 acres of farmland are lying fallow or dying. The region’s agricultural output is expected to decline by between \$1 billion and \$3 billion this year over last, according to estimates by agricultural and business groups.

Whether the delta smelt is to blame lies at the heart of the debate. While some blame the fish for the severe reductions in pumping from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, others argue that the region’s three-year drought is primarily to blame.

Some environmentalists say the agriculture industry needs to adapt to the reduced water supply and live within its means.

“Big Ag must now learn to do more with less,” campaigner Brian Smith wrote on Earthjustice.org. “The days of copious taxpayer-subsidized water exports from the Delta are coming to an end. And the idea of killing off numerous native fish species, decimating Northern California fishing communities and turning the Delta into a fetid swamp is simply not allowed under federal law.”

The situation for farmers is likely to get worse before it gets better. Federal regulators are poised to enact more water restrictions to protect the chinook salmon, the steelhead and other fish. Estimates are that the cutbacks could result in the removal of 500,000 acre-feet of water.

Scaling back the Central Valley agriculture industry, also known as America’s fruit basket, would have an economic impact that stretches beyond California. Americans undoubtedly would find themselves buying more fruits, vegetables and nuts from foreign sources, Mr. Rivett said.

“It’s certainly going to impact our food security. We know our farmers here produce a product that’s safe and healthy; we don’t know what will happen if we’re importing those products,” he said.

Others supporting the “Save Our Water” petition include the California Chamber of Commerce, which urged state and federal officials to protect agricultural water supplies “from measures that will inflict serious economic and social harm on millions of Californians.”

In May, the foundation filed a lawsuit against the Fish and Wildlife Service on behalf of several Central Valley farmers challenging the agency’s authority to issue regulations on behalf of the delta smelt.



1 simple rule to making a fortune overnight...



Top cruise lines are giving away their unsold cabins at up to 75% off...



“Renegade” trader spills secret to becoming rich with dirt cheap penny stocks...



Strange African fruit burns 8.9 pounds of fat every 28 days.

## COMMENTS



Add New Comment

Login



Type your comment here.

► [Obama budget defeated 414-0](#)

► [PICKET: Spike Lee apologizes to elderly Florida couple...settles with family](#)

## COMMENTARY

[DECKER: Obama's French auto bailout](#)

By Brett M Decker

Government Motors buys a stake in sputtering Peugeot

[WOLF: Obamacare's inescapable death march](#)

[TYRRELL: Paul Ryan's budget express](#)

[MILLER: The five-year budget itch](#)

[EDITORIAL: Justice Roberts' cellphone](#)



## Business Directory

Search box with a search button and a link to Popular Searches. Powered by Local.com

## HAPPENING NOW



[Congress passes short-term transportation bill](#)

By Sean Lenggell - The Washington Times

After failing to agree on a long-range plan to keep federal highway and transit programs ...



[State Dept. plays down envoy's insinuations about Russian press tapping phone](#)

By Guy Taylor - The Washington Times

The State Department on Wednesday tried to downplay several Twitter comments in

which the U.S. ...



[Online voting not secure, cyber experts say](#)

By Shaun Waterman - The Washington Times

Thirty-three states are planning to allow some form of Internet voting in November's elections, but ...

Most Read

Most Shared

Most Emailed

[PICKET: Spike Lee apologizes to elderly Florida couple...settles with family](#)

[WOLF: Obamacare's inescapable death march](#)

[Obama budget defeated 414-0](#)

[Gingrich says no deal after a secret talk with Romney](#)

[Bill Maher's 'Real Time': The survival manual](#)