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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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*****STATEMENT*****

**SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY
ON REQUEST FROM U.S. BUREAU OF RECLAMATION FOR EXCHANGE
CONTRACT RENEGOTIATIONS**

Los Banos, CA -- The San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority today received a letter from the United States Bureau of Reclamation requesting to open renegotiations of the Exchange Contract, which has underpinned the system of water supply and infrastructure development in the Central Valley for almost 90 years. For the Exchange Contract to be modified, both the Exchange Contractors and the Bureau of Reclamation would need to jointly and mutually agree to any changes. Chris White, the Executive Director of the Exchange Contractors, today released the following statement:

“We recognize the seriousness of the current drought affecting the western United States and the many complicated trade-offs with managing it. The Exchange Contractors have long had a productive working relationship with the Bureau of Reclamation, and we are always willing to work creatively to address the ongoing drought.

The Exchange Contract is the foundation for the creation of water supply and infrastructure in California. It was the essential agreement that allowed for the development of the Central Valley Project and the construction of the Friant and Delta-Mendota Canal systems in the Central Valley. This led to the creation of the most important agricultural region in the United States. The impact of renegotiating this agreement, especially if it resulted in a reduction of our water supplies, would be devastating to the region. It would undermine decades of investments and financial commitments upon which our economy is built.

The consequences could extend beyond the lost jobs and the significant economic losses to agriculture. Tens of thousands of people in our local disadvantaged communities depend on water that is provided to or conveyed by the Exchange Contractors, and we cannot afford to make any changes without regard to on-the-ground impacts on real people. Furthermore, local wildlife refuges are sustained by water supplied and conveyed by the Exchange Contractors.

We are in conversation with Reclamation to further understand their intentions and we will continue to have an open line of dialogue. While we are not willing to agree to change the Exchange Contract, we will continue to seek creative and collaborative solutions for reliable regional water supplies while advocating in support of our farmers, our communities, and our economy.”