

Given the choice of giving water to thirsty Southern Californians or the San Bernardino kangaroo rat, we'll choose the Californians.

The Center for Biological Diversity wants the Santa Ana River to be free flowing to save the endangered species along the river.

Fine, except for a couple of things:

First, the river has never been “free flowing” as we usually think of a river. It has had periods when it was a mile wide, but most of the time it is a dry stream bed with little or no water most of the year.

With construction of the Seven Oaks Dam, the opportunity came, not only to prevent flooding, but to preserve and use water stored behind the dam.

So local water agencies applied for water rights behind the dam, planning to use good mountain water to replace water imported from Northern California and the Colorado River, both of which reach the Inland Empire much less pure than the Santa Ana River water.

Second, the Center for Biological Diversity apparently has not seen the river and seems to have little information, except that provided by those paid exorbitant sums to find scarce plants and animals.

If those species still exist, then it will not matter much whether the water is diverted; they already have survived the ups and downs of the river.

The state Water Resources Control Board has heard arguments from both the Center for Biological Diversity and local water agencies and may make a decision by the end of the year.

It didn't take us that long to figure it out.