

March 16, 2017

State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

Merced County Farm Bureau



Dear Chairwoman Marcus,

On behalf of 1,200 farmers, ranchers and dairy families residing and working in Merced County, we submit this letter regarding the State Water Resources Control Board's (SWB) Bay Delta Plan and Substitute Environmental Document (SED). We have many areas of concern and urge you to take time to review the document, in full detail and with proper science, prior to adopting a plan that will devastate our affected counties.

Many of our communities are disadvantaged, yet this proposal plans to remove fresh drinking water that is so heavily depended upon as our cities and unincorporated areas are primarily reliant on groundwater. Our communities experienced life-changing impacts due to the recent multiyear drought, one that has yet to be escaped. Wells ran dry and had to be drilled anew. Community members had to reach out to our Office of Emergency Services to be afforded the luxury of serviceable water while at the same time purchasing cases of clean drinking water.

It should be no surprise that the economic driver of Merced County is agriculture. Ranking sixth in agriculture production in California, Merced County agricultural commodities grossed \$3,589,903,000 in 2015. The impacts of a rule such as the Bay Delta Plan will drastically affect our ability to aid in feeding the world. In addition, our California legislative bodies raised not only minimum wage, but also altered agricultural overtime. This governing body and proposed plan brings to question if that even matters. Without water, our employees will no longer have jobs in our community nor will our farms be as productive as they are today.

The Department of Water Resources (DWR), another governmental agency, declared that the Merced Subbasin has been critically overdrafted and must come into groundwater compliance by 2040. Regulated by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) of 2014, water levels will need to return to January 2015 levels. While our leaders are coming together to solve the issue, this plan will cease all progression. Compounding the issue is the feeling that SWB staff does not feel that SGMA and the Bay Delta Plan are tied together; yet removing our recharge method of surface water will drastically affect our ability to comply with SGMA. This will not allow us the ability to offset the loss that has occurred, and essentially, declares our Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP) inadequate before they are written.

New Exchequer Dam was built on the backs of many of the families that still call Merced County home and we are happy to say that Merced County Farm Bureau played a large role in the beginning stages of the dam. Since its initial operation, Merced Irrigation District has managed the Merced River as good stewards. We encourage you to review and select the Merced River SAFE Plan, instead of the proposal that has been presented.

Time and time again, agriculture has bended. We have adapted to new technology and practices so that more can be done with less. As we celebrate our one-hundredth year of service, we hope that Merced County Farm Bureau is able to celebrate another 100 years. Our economy, agricultural makeup, and community will be drastically impacted should you elect to adopt this proposal. We appreciate the opportunity to comment and look forward to the final outcome of the proposed plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Breanne Ramos'.

Breanne Ramos
Executive Director

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