



B. Kelley

January 21, 2009

Chair Richard Wright and Regional Board Members
San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
San Diego – Region 9
9174 Sky Park Court, Suite 100
San Diego, CA 92123

I represent The Flower Fields® in Carlsbad, CA, the only working ranunculus field in the world that is open to the public, and I am writing you in support of the Carlsbad desalination plant.

The Flower Fields has been an important part of Carlsbad's local heritage for over 60 years and attracts over 150,000 visitors each season. Each spring, The Flower Fields dazzle visitors with over 50 acres of Giant Tecolote Ranunculus, roses, poinsettias and orchids. Approximately 6-8 million ranunculus bulbs are harvested each season and sold at nurseries and garden centers across the country. We also provide educational activities for children, including classroom presentations, activity sheets, field trips and an on-site growing program, and composting workshops for adults.

With the dry weather conditions our region has experienced in the past few years, irrigation water has been a necessity for the survival of our operations. As participants in Metropolitan Water District's discounted agricultural program, we have been dealing with a 30% reduction in agricultural water supplies due to California's overall decline in water supplies. This is the first time in the program's 14-year history that agricultural users have been ordered to cut water usage.

Without a doubt, this is having an extremely negative effect on our agricultural operations and that of many of our farming neighbors, including the Carlsbad Strawberry Company which operates a "U-Pick" strawberry field for the public. Many local farms have already reduced the size of their crop planting this year to compensate for the reduced water supply. This is drastically affecting their ability to survive and could lead to the loss of numerous small farming businesses in North San Diego.

One of the few options our region has in dealing with the reduction in imported water is to diversify and increase the local water supplies through desalination. We believe that Poseidon Resources' Carlsbad Desalination Project has been well-conceived, has undergone rigorous testing to ensure water quality and environmental safety, and will provide multiple benefits to our entire region.

A reliable and affordable water supply is crucial to the survival of The Flower Fields and hundreds of small farming operations in San Diego. We strongly urge the Board to approve the Marine Life Mitigation Plan for the Carlsbad Desalination Project at the February public hearing so that we can move forward to construction on this important new local water supply.

Sincerely,

Joni Miringoff

Joni Miringoff
The Flower Fields

cc:

David King, Vice Chairman
Eric Anderson, Board Member
Grant Destache, Board Member
George Loveland, Board Member
Wayne Rayfield, Board Member
Gary Thompson, Board Member
Kris Weber, Board Member
John Robertus, Executive Director
Catherine Hagan, Regional Board Attorney