

YUBA
COUNTY



WATER
AGENCY

1402 D STREET
MARYSVILLE
CALIFORNIA
95901-4226

TELEPHONE
530.741.6278
FACSIMILE
530.741.6541

**POLICY STATEMENT OF
DON SCHRADER**

January 10, 2006

Good morning. I am Don Schrader and I am the chairman of the Yuba County Water Agency's Board of Directors. I would like to discuss briefly why Yuba's 2006 pilot program and the Yuba River Accord are so important to our County.

Yuba County is one of the poorest counties in the state. Specifically, according to the state Department of Finance, the County's per capita income in 1999 ranked 57th out of 58 counties. According to the U.S. Census, the median household income in California in 1999 was \$47,493, but the median income in our County was only \$30,460. That is about 36% less than the state overall. Also according to the Census, in California in 2000, the median value of a house was about \$212,000, but the median in our County was only \$89,700. Even in the middle of the huge escalation of housing values in California, our County is lagging very far behind.

Why is this? A big part of the reason is floods. I remember the adults when I was a kid talking about the 1950 flood. I personally lived through the 1986 and 1997 floods. As we all know from seeing what Hurricane Katrina did to New Orleans, getting flooded out is not just about having the water go in your house and leave. It leaves mud. It soaks the walls. It wrecks your furniture. It hurts the foundation. In a sense, floods do the same kind of thing to communities that they do to houses.

You can see that when you look at the Census numbers for Linda, which is the community just south of the Yuba River where the levee broke in 1986. This is the community involved in the *Paterno* litigation. When you look at the 2000 Census numbers for Linda, they show that the median household income there is \$22,753. That means that half of the households make less than that. About 33 percent of the households in Linda are below the poverty line. In addition to being a director of the Yuba County Water Agency, I also have been a Yuba County supervisor for almost 10 years. We have been working hard to improve Linda and other parts of the County, but it is difficult to address the flood risk.

Floods in Yuba County are also bad for the state overall. California recently paid \$464 million to settle the 1986 flood claims and \$45 million to settle the 1997 flood claims.

Reducing the flood risk is one of the big reasons why the Yuba River Accord is so important to us. These proposed agreements would allow the Water Agency to settle its dispute about instream flows in a way that would ensure a steady stream of income that the Agency could use to support the local cost-shares for desperately needed flood-control measures.

Besides its importance to the County, the Accord is important as a model for how water interests that have been arguing for a long time can come together. If you had told me when this Board held its 2000 hearing that we would be standing here with the Department of Fish and Game's Director supporting the same thing, I would not have believed you. But that is where we are now. We have specific river flows under the Lower Yuba River Accord that the biologists from the Water Agency, Fish and Game,

National Marine Fisheries, Fish and Wildlife and conservation groups have agreed are good for the River's fish. We have proposed agreements about compensation to the Water Agency, about providing new water for the CALFED Environmental Water Account and about local districts' conjunctive uses of groundwater. That is where we are today.

And we need to move forward from today. The way to do that is to implement the Accord. The first step to implement the Accord is to grant Yuba's extension petition for the 2006 pilot program. The Accord is a product of more discussion, analysis, negotiation and work than you can believe. Every piece is tied to every other piece. The petition that you have in front of you is a big piece. Granting that petition keeps everyone moving forward to where we have agreed we need to go. I therefore ask you to approve the Agency's petition.