



TULARE COUNTY FARM BUREAU

Mission: to promote and enhance the viability of Tulare County agriculture.

August 10, 2015

WATER STORAGE INVESTMENT PROGRAM PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS FOR THE RECORD

On behalf of the Tulare County Farm Bureau and its 2,000 farm and ranch families we represent, we support your efforts to hold important stakeholder meetings on the Water Bond and the \$2.7 billion allocated for water projects and increased storage.

Thank you for your important and critical work in seeking out the public's input on critical water storage investment needs in California.

California's Central Valley, which provides the majority of fruits and vegetables for the country, has been suffering from a drought, which has only been made worse by a myriad of state and federal regulations curtailing water flows. As a result, over 300 billion gallons of water have been diverted away from the region in an effort to protect the Delta Smelt. Today, citizens and farmers in the Central Valley are receiving less water, if any at all, than they previously contracted for and purchased. The water system that established California as a beacon of ingenuity has been pushed to the wayside for a bait fish and has had devastating consequences for farmers, as they now fallow thousands of acres of farmland. Cities in the Central Valley have run dry, relying solely on trucks to deliver potable water.

Tulare County Farm Bureau continues to remain very concerned about water reliability in the San Joaquin Valley and throughout California and wishes to voice our concern for reliable storage to be expanded statewide. The \$2.7 billion allocated thru the bond needs to be spent wisely and efficiently in the near term on developing storage plans that can be successfully vetted thru the environmental process in an expeditious manner, and result in real net gains of water being stored and delivered to Central Valley towns and farms. Artificial water on paper will not get us there. Bond funds need to be allocated to projects that have the ability to make a distinct difference in the amount of water banked and stored in both wet and dry years.

The Valley's economy depends on healthy rural communities that can provide safe and reliable water supplies to their residents. These residents fuel the economy in the Valley by contributing to the agricultural workforce and beyond. Studying projects for decades will not result in real gains, and we need short term relief and long term forward planning that will result in bond funds being spent to maximize water storage gains thru Temperance Flat and a variety of other storage projects statewide.

Ultimately the expenditure of the bond funds should:

- Increase storage capacity within our existing reservoir systems
- Construct new reservoirs throughout the entire state
- Direct the state and feds to re-evaluate the current managements plans to allow improved operational flexibility of our water projects

In Tulare County, the agriculture industry directly supports 25% or more of the employment of our County's residents, and a large percentage of our disadvantaged and minority residents are directly impacted when agriculture jobs are lost. In-directly the agriculture industry's multiplier effect adds approximately \$3 additional dollars for every \$1 produced by agriculture, and the effect in our communities is immense when drought and water cut backs cripple our farms and ranches.

We need more water, we need to be able to capture rainfall when it sporadically occurs in this state, and we need to enhance our storage and conveyance of snowmelt statewide. We need to begin exploring other storage options including desalination, ground water recharge and more extensive banking programs, and we need to begin this planning today and expedite its goals for the betterment of this state.

Thank you,
Joey Airoso, President
Tulare County Farm Bureau