

*Celebrating
100
Years*

KERN COUNTY FARM BUREAU

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State Water Resources Control Board
Tom Howard
6133 Freeport Blvd, 2nd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95822

Re: Temporary Urgency Change Petition filed by the United States Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Water Resources

Dear Mr. Howard:

On behalf of 1,400 agricultural members of Kern County, many of which earn their living from their production of agriculture, we would like to express our strong support to the petition request that was filed by the United States Bureau of Reclamation and the California Department of Water Resources to increase the export pumping under certain flow conditions in the Delta that was supported by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The request appears to proactively look at the current conditions and forecasts based on hydrology to lessen the impacts learned from the 2014 drought operations.

Most of California's Central Valley depends on the State Water Project and the Central Valley Project system which are the main sources supporting the farming industry and the municipalities within the central valley. Kern County agriculture as a whole is quickly becoming an industry that is more and more dependent on groundwater pumping due to the lack of surface water being delivered.

It is known that Kern County has several communities/municipalities classified as disadvantaged communities and this additional flow would and will assist in the farming industry to continue to employ those residents of those communities. According to an economic study that was done in Kern County in 2014, our county is ranked second in the nation in terms of county agricultural sales value, with 2013 production estimated at approximately \$6.8 billion (2013 Kern County Crop Report). This production supports total agricultural employment of approximately 60,000 jobs, or 15.1 percent of the Kern County employment, with approximately 55,000 jobs related to crop production (California Employment Development Department, 2014). Without careful planning and mitigation measures in place consequences would include: **an estimated 20 percent reduction in the overall Kern agricultural sector (in terms of irrigated acreage, farm sales, and agricultural employment): reduced irrigated acreage of approximately 185,200 acres, reduced annual gross farm sales of approximately \$1.27 billion, and reduced farm sector employment of approximately 12,400 jobs (2014 Kern Tax Agricultural Economic Study for Kern County, Highland Economics LLC).**

Kern County growers and ranchers depend on the surface water deliveries to keep their agricultural production sustainable, meanwhile creating thousands of jobs for our economy. Despite the recent rain, the agricultural industry awaits solutions to their upcoming irrigation and harvest season. Based on the economic need, potential impacts to the operations of our farming and ranching businesses, Kern County Farm Bureau strongly supports the effort to increase the Delta water export to the Central Valley. We hope that you will reconsider supporting the petition to increase the flows from the Delta given the potential harm limiting water exportation does to California's abundant agricultural industry.

Sincerely,



Greg Wegis
President