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Statement by California Farm Water Coalition Executive Director Mike Wade on the upcoming release of proposed flow standards for tributaries to the San Joaquin River

SACRAMENTO- California officials are on the verge of releasing new water regulations that would cause significant harm to California residents without quantifying any specific environmental benefits.

The State Water Resources Control Board is expected to release its Water Quality Control Plan on Thursday, September 15 that would set new requirements for water flowing in tributaries to the San Joaquin River.

The expected result is the direct loss of 350,000 acre-feet of water that is currently used to grow food on 100,000 acres of prime farmland. It is enough water to serve the domestic needs of 2 million Californians or produce almost 5.8 billion salads.

"If implemented, the State Water Board's rule will have a devastating impact on drinking water, sanitation needs, food production, the economy and jobs for people stretching from the Northern San Joaquin Valley throughout the Bay Area. That's why this regulation is opposed by schools, health departments, farmers, Latinos, cities, economic development officials and more," said Mike Wade, executive director of the California Farm Water Coalition.

"It is unbelievable that our government would propose regulations that their own staff say will put farms out of business, reduce water supplies and have negative impacts on groundwater. Yet they can't tell us what, if anything, this will do to protect the environment.

"The reason they cannot demonstrate benefit is because science clearly shows that decades of releasing water to the ocean has failed to halt the decline of Chinook salmon and Delta smelt. It is time to stop relying on failed strategies and move on to solutions that science tells us will help."

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Public quotes from letters submitted in 2016 to SWRCB on unimpaired flows rule

Drinking Water Quality and Availability Will Be Negatively Impacted

"Let us be clear. The detrimental impacts of the Board's plan will be felt strongly by the children that we serve. . . it is unclear why you have not taken the time to study the financial implications to school districts that would be forced to provide bottled water and portable toilets, or relocate schools entirely, as wells go dry. . . Access to drinking water and water for sanitation is a basic requirement for us to fulfill our mandate to provide quality education to the children of our districts."

**Steven Gomes, Merced County Superintendent of Schools
Tom Changnon, Stanislaus County Superintendent of Schools**

"Many communities in the Merced area are already experiencing well production problems and drinking water quality issues . . . Over 800,000 people live in the two counties [Stanislaus and Merced]. Groundwater is the primary source of drinking water for the majority of the local population. The plan sorely understates the devastation this recommendation will cause. As an Interim Director of Environmental Health, I am required to ensure that safe, adequate, and dependable water supplies are available for domestic use."

**Vicki Jones, Interim Director of Environmental Health
Merced County Department of Public Health**

Jobs and the Economy Will Suffer

"Over 55% of the residents of Stanislaus County are members of minority communities, with a majority of those residents being Latinos.

"As you know, our economy is largely driven by the agricultural sector, of which Latino workers play a vital role. Our unemployment rates in Stanislaus County are already consistently higher than the state and national averages. There is no doubt that your plan will have devastating economic consequences to an already disadvantaged region."

**Maggie Mejia, President
Latino Community Roundtable**

"I am all for protecting the environment to the best of our ability, but not at the expense of our farmers, businesses and citizens. . . When farmers are forced to fallow more land, our food prices go up and the poor in our communities suffer the greatest. This proposal will raise the cost of water and electricity, as well."

**Pamela LaChapell
Modesto**

"As the Director of Environmental Resources for the County, I am responsible for the administration and oversight of over 200 public water systems, approximately 2,000 retail food facilities and countless other businesses. This would be devastating to the local economy."

**Jami Aggers, Director of Environmental Resources
Stanislaus County**

"We grew up in Stanislaus County and our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents were all farmers. . . We also are grateful that our children were raised here and their children will be raised here . . . Without water there will be many of us who will not be able to farm and those that work the fields and canneries during the harvest will be unemployed and unable to feed their families, buy clothing and supplies in our local stores. Our electricity costs will increase and our ground water will be depleted . . . we implore you to reconsider."

**George and Annemarie Espinola
Hughson**

"Food production is a multi-billion dollar industry in our county and adds tremendous value to the State of California. . . Tens of thousands of people are dependent on jobs in agriculture, food processing, and its related industries. Our businesses pay millions of dollars in taxes each year to sustain our state government . . . We ask that you please consider our needs in the Central Valley with others' needs and wants."

**David White, Chief Executive Officer
Stanislaus Business Alliance**

And yet the Board wants to keep doing more of the same even
though it has been proven ineffective

"Simply flushing water down the river in the spring and fall does not work - a fact supported by more than two decades of proven science."

**Robbie Lake
French Camp**

"I've lived on the Stanislaus for 40 years. Salmon are declining and the striped bass are increasing. What the state is doing is creating the opposite effect of what it says it wants."

**Jeff McPhee
Oakdale**

"[The proposed regulation] is yet another demonstration of the complete disregard you hold for the people you are supposed to be serving. . . I encourage you to reduce your personal water use by 35% and pour that extra water into the street and watch it flow away. That is what you would be doing to the people you serve."

**Roxanne Garbez
Oakdale**

People Are Asking for Common Sense, Balance and an End to
Tactics That Just Make a Bad Situation Worse

"We need a common sense approach to how this water is used. . . In your efforts to help, you are creating a bigger problem than we had before."

Nancy Petersen

"We have worked hard to be good citizens and lower our water usage in the face of this drought. In fact, the Central Valley has led the state in water conservation efforts . . . We implore you to send staff to meet with us and come up with a common sense approach to this situation."

**David White, Chief Executive Officer
Stanislaus Business Alliance**

"Why add water to the ocean? Does it need more?"

**Suzy Fivecoat
Waterford**

"It is time we manage our water resource in a way that is fair to everyone and strikes a balance between water supply and the environment."

**Roseanna Swanberg
Modesto**

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The California Farm Water Coalition (CFWC) is a statewide organization representing a cross-section of California agriculture.