



GARY SOISETH
MAYOR

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
GSOISETH@TURLOCK.CA.US

156 S. BROADWAY, SUITE 230 | TURLOCK, CALIFORNIA 95380 | PHONE 209-668-5540 | FAX 209-668-5668

April 6, 2015

Assemblymember Adam Gray
PO Box 942849
State Capitol
Sacramento CA, 94249-0021

Subject: City of Turlock Support of AB 1242

Dear Assemblymember Gray:

As mayor of the City of Turlock, I am writing to express my support of AB 1242, a bill that would require the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to consider impacts on groundwater basins when approving water quality control plans. The City of Turlock operates both municipal water and wastewater utilities, serving a population of over 70,000 residents through approximately 19,000 water service connections. Turlock is also home to a number of agriculture-related industries—primarily food processors—which provide significant employment in the region.

As a city in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, we remain very concerned with the conclusions in the draft Substitute Environmental Document (SED) for the proposed Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (Bay-Delta Plan). The Bay-Delta Plan would require significant increases in unimpaired flows from the Merced, the Stanislaus, and the Tuolumne Rivers. The environmental document also notes that the impacts to groundwater will be “significant and unavoidable,” a clear conflict with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014.

Like most communities in the region, the City of Turlock relies solely on groundwater from 22 wells for its drinking water source. Turlock is fully aware that the San Joaquin Valley’s groundwater is a diminishing resource that is subject to potential overdraft; as the Turlock Groundwater Management Plan notes, a cone of depression east of Turlock has developed due to groundwater. Unfortunately, groundwater quality has also declined, which has forced our city to abandon a number of its municipal wells due to arsenic, nitrate, and volatile organic compound (VOC) contamination.

Knowing that our current groundwater supply will only sustain us through the next ten to fifteen years, the City of Turlock has been proactive. Along with the Cities of Ceres and Modesto, Turlock created the Stanislaus Regional Water Authority (SRWA), a governing body charged with developing a regional solution through a surface water supply project. This multi-jurisdictional and collaborative approach envisions a local irrigation district providing raw surface water to our cities for safe, clean, and reliable drinking water.

Past Turlock leaders also had the foresight to add recycled water to our water supply portfolio through the implementation of tertiary wastewater treatment at Turlock’s Regional Water Quality Control Facility. This effort—in combination with aggressive conservation efforts by our citizens—has allowed our city to reduce its water demand from 25,474 acre feet per year (AFY) in 2004 to 20,144 AFY in 2014.

Even more remarkably, these reductions have been achieved during a period of significant population growth. While all of these water conservation efforts are laudable, Turlock estimates that our water demand in 2030 will exceed 30,220 AFY, far in excess of our local subbasin's sustainable yield and making the SRWA efforts a top priority of Turlock's City Hall.

Surface water irrigation practices have also provided much-needed environmental and economic benefits to my community. Without the Turlock Irrigation District's application of surface water to Turlock's neighboring farms, the city's economy—which is largely based on agriculture and already suffering from chronic unemployment and other socio-economic factors—would be unavoidably and negatively impacted.

Put simply, surface water irrigation is Turlock's single largest source of groundwater recharge, and the overdraft of our local subbasin would be significantly worse without the substantial benefits of agricultural irrigation. AB 1242 allows our local irrigation districts and farmers to continue their decades-long practices of sustainable groundwater management that has benefits to the entire region, including the City of Turlock.

As stated above, AB 1242 is vital to the prevention of adverse environmental and economic impacts from water quality control plans, and I offer any support you might need from Turlock's City Hall as you fight to protect both the farmers and residents of Turlock.

Sincerely,



Gary Soiseth
Mayor
City of Turlock, California