



# MERCED IRRIGATION DISTRICT

April 10, 2015

Assemblymember Adam Gray  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0021

Dear Assemblymember Gray:

I am writing in support of your proposed legislation, Assembly Bill 1242, as written. The State Water Resources Control Board is moving ahead with plans that directly harm our water supply and ability to recharge local groundwater. This legislation marks a crucial step in attempting to address this reality.

Merced Irrigation District has existed since the early 1900s and serves approximately 2,200 growers on 130,000 acres of agriculture land in eastern Merced County. The majority of the District consists of small, generational family farms spanning less than 50 acres.

The District owns and operates Lake McClure, a 1-million-acre-foot reservoir in the Sierra Nevada foothills. This reservoir is a critical resource for our conjunctively-operated district as well as for our entire community. Each year, as MID provides surface water to growers from Lake McClure, it also provides approximately 100,000 acre feet of groundwater recharge to eastern Merced County through unlined waterways and recharge basins. This benefits agriculture as well as cities whose sole source of water is groundwater. In dry years, such as this, the District uses its wells to conjunctively-pump a portion of this water for in-district use.

The State Water Resources Control Board is currently moving forward with plans to update the Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan. This calls for a significantly increased diversion of water normally stored in Lake McClure, and used to recharge local groundwater: 35 percent unimpaired flow from February through June. This will have a direct impact on the groundwater source used by several cities and unincorporated communities in eastern Merced County.

Further, this proposal runs completely counter to the goals of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act established in 2014. Without our water supply in Lake McClure, eastern Merced County will be significantly hindered in any attempt to comply with the goals for groundwater sustainability as set in the SGMA.

This represents a direct threat to health and human safety. Further, with agriculture a primary economic driver in our region, there is a compounded concern that both crime and already-high unemployment will be exacerbated.

Any state policy calling for increased diversions of MercedID surface water remains at odds with any policy requiring groundwater sustainability. These issues must be reconciled.

Assembly Bill 1242, as drafted, marks a significant step toward this. I offer full support to this legislation and any assistance that may be of help to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Sweigard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end.

John Sweigard  
General Manager  
Merced Irrigation District