

From William Bourdeau, Executive VP
Harris Farms, Inc.
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To The Honorable Adam Gray
Assemblymember, 21st District
State Capitol, Room 6012
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. Gray,

I, William Bourdeau, am the Executive Vice President of Harris Farms, Inc. ("Harris"). The State Water Resource Control Board ("Board") is planning to issue an updated Substitute Environmental Document for the Bay-Delta Program in the near future. As we understand it, the Board's plan would hinder our ability to achieve groundwater sustainability and will cause additional distress for the societies and economies around us.

Harris Farms is in the Westlands Water District ("Westlands") and has farmed in the area since 1937. We traditionally grow almonds, lettuce, wheat, tomatoes, pistachios, asparagus, watermelons, onions, cantaloupes, broccoli, bell peppers, cabbage and cotton in Westlands. We own or have an interest in a tomato processing facility, an onion packing shed, a garlic packing shed, an almond hulling and shelling operation and an asparagus packing shed. We also operate a large cattle feeding operation and a beef processing facility, and a hotel/restaurant complex. The total operation provides about 1,750 full time jobs, and several thousand additional part time jobs to the area.

Westlands' allocations are normally the primary water source for our farm. Since 2007, however, the United States Bureau of Reclamation ("Reclamation") has dramatically reduced the allocation of water supply to Westlands, which in turn, has dramatically reduced our water supply.

The dramatically reduced allocation of water from Westlands has required us to fallow large sections of highly productive farm land. For instance, in 2013 we had to

fallow 3,478 of our 14,133 acres in Westlands. In 2014, that number rose to 8,044 with a zero percent (0%) allocation. This year the zero percent allocation continues, and we are fallowing 9,091 acres, or two thirds of our acreage in Westlands. As a result of the fallowing, we laid off 3,100 of our seasonal workers. The region surrounding Harris has been shown to be the epicenter of the terrible socioeconomic hardships resulting from the current drought.

The dramatically reduced allocation of water from Westlands has also forced us to attempt to find alternative sources of water. We have been forced to utilize our wells more than in previous years. For the first time since we began receiving Central Valley Project allocations decades ago, in 2014, well water was the majority of our total water supply, as compared to 0.5% in 2012.

Increased use of well water is problematic for several reasons. First of all, our well water is marginal in quality as it contains significant levels of sodium, boron and other minerals. As a result, it must be blended with higher quality surface water to dilute these elements. Our irrigation practices are very efficient utilizing drip irrigation and micro jet sprinklers. However, when well water is used, more sand and corrosive minerals are introduced into both our systems and the soil, resulting in lower yields and more wear and tear on our irrigation systems. Additionally, when more well water is pumped, it increases the likelihood of a well becoming inoperable, either due to overuse or well water over-draft. Due to increased well water pumping, in the last two years we had to abandon wells and drill new ones. Due to the geology in our area the depth of each well is 2,400 feet and will cost around \$750,000 each. This investment was done to enable us to continue to blend the poor quality well water with higher quality surface water. Even with these measures, the quality of the groundwater is such that it damages and shortens the life and production of most crops. Other costs of using well water include the cost for testing the well water, repairs and maintenance, energy costs, booster pump costs, plus the pipe and labor necessary to move water around the farm, which is costing us

approximately \$126,000 per month.

A very real impact of the cumulative well water pumping occurring in our region is that it results in drastic over-drafting of the ground water basin. This makes the use of well water not a sustainable alternative to adequate Westlands allocations and creates serious soil subsidence conditions with continued over-drafting.

Last year the Legislature passed the Sustainability Groundwater Management Act which promised to give our community the tools to achieve sustainability of our ground water basin. The Board's proposal would deny our basin of the most important tool to achieving sustainability: the ability to recharge the depleted groundwater table with surface flows.

We request that the Board consider and mitigate the adverse impact of any new water quality control plan such as the one proposed. Adopting the Board's proposal as proposed will have negative effects to our most severe groundwater basins and our most disadvantaged communities. Harris desires to achieve groundwater sustainability, which will be in jeopardy due to decreased surface deliveries. Further, I expect that our employment rates will continue to drop, which we are concerned will be the trend throughout the San Joaquin Valley, and that the resulting economic impact for the residents and workers in our community will be terrible.

William Bourdeau
Harris Farms, Inc.