

May 9, 2014

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.  
Governor  
State of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown,

We appreciate the steps you have taken to mitigate the effects of the drought on California's farmers and ranchers. As you know, the drought has created a new sense of urgency among many legislators to act on water issues generally and groundwater especially. Rushed legislation would be a grave mistake. In complex areas of California law and policy, the desire to make change must be tempered by deliberation, a thorough understanding of consequences and a public process that inspires confidence in the new laws.

Proposals to fundamentally change California's approach to groundwater management are no exception. We respectfully caution that enacting policy legislation in this area *as part of the state budget package* would conflict with these principles of sound public process, and we are very concerned about the likely response by farmers and ranchers to such rushed action.

We understand that a crisis tends to focus attention, but there is no good reason to rush groundwater legislation. Current discussions are proof that the urge to do something in a crisis can become unwisely disconnected from contributing factors that demand equal attention.

In January 2013, more than 800,000 acre feet of water that could have been diverted and stored in San Luis Reservoir was allowed to flow out the Delta and into the ocean. This year, storms in February and March produced short but strong pulse flows of runoff in the Delta, providing 225,000 to 450,000 acre feet of water that could have been pumped to San Luis Reservoir for later use by farms and cities. Instead, with no demonstrable benefit to endangered fish species or anyone else, it was sent out to the ocean.

We remind you of these unfortunate facts because these regulatory decisions caused increased stress on groundwater basins in the San Joaquin Valley, which effect is now cited as justification for rushing new groundwater legislation. By denying farms the small amounts of surface water these storms produced, these regulatory decisions forced farmers to increase their use of groundwater to keep crops alive and protect some of their investments. Furthermore, these decisions compounded the overdraft of groundwater resources by denying surface water used for irrigation – an important source of groundwater recharge.

We do not take the position that the status quo in California's approach to groundwater is acceptable, however, we refuse to be told to accept the status quo in California's approach to surface water storage and delivery while being told that change in groundwater storage and delivery must occur now.

Over the last 22 years, through acts of Congress, regulatory actions and court decisions, four million acre feet of water annually has been taken from agriculture to be reallocated to environmental flows. Projects that were constructed for the explicit purposes of flood control and provision of irrigation water to reduce stress on groundwater basins, have been repurposed for environmental mandates that have the perverse effect of increasing stress on groundwater basins. Yet farmers are the ones being blamed, and they are told that now their ability to access the only water left available will be curtailed, too.

Governor, we want to work with you in a constructive manner to address California's many water supply challenges. At the moment, however, we must share our deep concern about the continued regulatory reductions of surface water and, as appears increasingly likely, groundwater resources. Together, as these absolutely must be taken, these policies present an existential threat to thousands of California farmers. Any attempt to jam legislation that fundamentally alters the state's groundwater laws will be viewed by many as an assault on their property rights and complicate our ability to find workable solutions together.

We would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss these matters further.

Sincerely,



African American Farmers of California  
Will Scott  
President



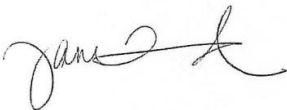
Ag Council of California  
Emily Rooney  
President



American Pistachio Growers  
Richard Matoian  
Executive Director



Association of California Egg Farmers  
Debra Murdock  
Executive Director



California Ag Irrigation Association  
Jane Townsend  
Manager



California Alfalfa & Forage Association  
Spencer Halsey  
Executive Director



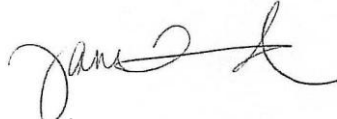
California Association of Nurseries  
And Garden Centers  
Chris Zanobini  
President



California Association of Wheat Growers  
Nick Matteis  
Executive Director



California Association of Wine Grape Growers  
John Aguirre  
President



California Bean Shippers Association  
Jane Townsend  
Manager



California Cattlemen's Association  
Justin Oldfield  
Vice President, Government Relations



California Cherry Growers & Industry Foundation  
Lora Velardo  
Associate Director



California Citrus Mutual  
Joel Nelsen  
President



California Cotton Ginners Association  
Roger Isom  
Executive Vice President



California Cotton Growers Association  
Roger Isom  
President & CEO



California Farm Bureau  
Paul Wenger  
President



California Grain and Feed Association  
Chris Zanobini  
CEO



California Grape & Tree Fruit League  
Barry Bedwell  
President



California League of Food Processors  
Rob Neenan  
President & CEO



California Pear Growers Association  
Debra Murdock  
President



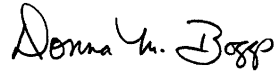
California Poultry Federation  
Bill Mattos  
President



California Rice Commission  
Tim Johnson  
President & CEO



California Seed Association  
Betsy Peterson  
Associate Director



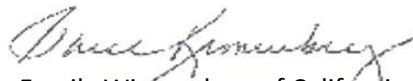
California State Floral Association  
Donna Boggs  
Associate Director



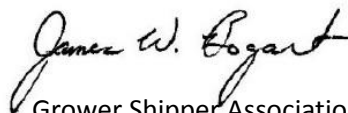
California Tomato Growers  
Mike Montna  
President



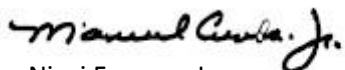
California Warehouse Association  
Ann Quinn  
Executive Vice President



Family Winemakers of California  
Paul Kronenberg  
President



Grower Shipper Association of Central CA  
Jim Bogart  
President



Nisei Farmers League  
Manuel Cunha  
President



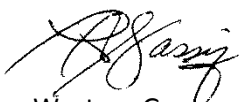
Pacific Coast Renderers  
Tad Bell  
Associate Director



Ventura County Agricultural Association  
Rob Roy  
President



Western Agricultural Processors Association  
Roger Isom  
President & CEO



Western Growers  
Tom Nassif  
President & CEO



Western United Dairymen  
Michael Marsh  
CEO

cc: Karen Ross, Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture  
John Laird, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency  
Matt Rodriguez, Secretary, Cal/EPA  
Mark Cowin, Director, Department of Water Resources  
Felicia Marcus, Chair, State Water Resources Control Board  
Nancy McFadden, Executive Secretary to the Governor