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FARMERS OF CALIFORNIA



WESTERN AGRICULTURAL PROCESSORS ASSOCIATION



May 3, 2021

The Honorable Toni Atkins  
President pro Tempore  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 205  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Pro Tem Atkins,

We commend you for your leadership in working to develop an emergency drought funding package and write to request you consider appropriating a total of \$1 billion to address drought related issues associated with implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). The current proposal allocates \$300 million for this purpose.

It is well known SGMA is likely to result in the fallowing of nearly 1 million acres of productive farmland in the San Joaquin Valley. The economic and environmental impacts of this will be significant and will disproportionately hit disadvantaged communities continuing to deal with the impacts of COVID-19.

The impending drought magnifies the importance of investing in projects that will help balance the aquifers and mitigate against devastating economic impacts to rural and already disadvantaged communities. Recharge projects are relatively small, localized, and incredibly effective.

In addition to funding for additional planning and recharge projects, there should be funding dedicated to a land retirement program (similar to what Assemblyman Rivas and Assemblyman Salas have

proposed in AB 252) that will incentivize landowners who take land out of production due to groundwater regulation to dedicate such land to other useful purposes, including habitat, conservation and recreation. This is critical to avoid haphazard fallowing across the Valley.

This additional funding should be focused on shovel ready projects identified by Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) and measurement and monitoring equipment needed to more accurately assess the local situation. These groups have developed the implementation plans and are acutely aware of the needs of the area and the projects that will deliver the most expeditious results.

SGMA clearly establishes a framework for sustainable groundwater planning that must involve and consider all beneficial uses and users. UC Davis research team conducted a spatial assessment to understand the distribution and extent of drinking water users in critically overdrafted groundwater basins. They reviewed each of the 41 unique Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) posted for public comment in early 2020 to determine how the plans reflect engagement with, and consideration of, these drinking water stakeholders.

Results found that critically overdrafted groundwater basins in the state cover nearly 250 communities and more than 40,000 drinking water wells, yet the presence or needs of such users is often not fully addressed in submitted GSPs due to the lack of funds to investigate data gaps.

State grants that do not require a match would help to address data gaps related to native yield studies. These studies will cost more than \$1 million in most GSA basins.

Time is of the essence. SGMA impacts are being felt now and the drought is here, not pending. If action is not taken immediately to address these needs, much will be lost.

We stand ready to work through the details of this proposal with you and your staff. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Will Scott, Jr., President  
African American Farmers of California



Nicole Helms, Executive Director  
California Alfalfa and Forage Association



Emily Rooney, President  
Agricultural Council of California



Todd Sanders, Executive Director  
California Apple Commission  
California Blueberry Association  
California Blueberry Commission  
Olive Growers Council of California



Richard Matoian, President  
American Pistachio Growers



Valerie Nera, Policy Advocate  
California Chamber of Commerce



Michelle M. Connelly, Executive Director & CEO  
California Walnut Commission



Casey Creamer, President  
California Citrus Mutual



Joani Woelfel, President & CEO  
Far West Equipment Dealers Association



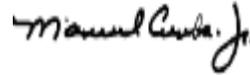
Roger Isom, President/CEO  
California Cotton Ginners and Growers  
Association  
Western Agricultural Processors Association



Christopher Valadez, President  
Grower-Shipper Association of Central  
California



Danny Merkley, Director, Water Resources  
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Gail Delihant, Director, Government Affairs  
Western Growers Association