



My name is Kevin Severns. I am the Chairman of California Citrus Mutual. I also happen to be a 40 acre citrus grower, and the General Manager of the Orange Cove-Sanger Citrus Association, a cooperative of mainly small family farmers.

My comments could be prefaced with a comment an older gentleman made at a Kings River Water Quality Coalition Outreach Event held earlier this year. Upon hearing of what was going to be demanded of him and his farming operation by requirements much less onerous than those being proposed he said abruptly "Time to sell out!"

Farmers have had it. Frustration with the changing and ever-increasing demands of documentation, restriction, regulation and essentially self-incrimination are driving many to seriously question this time honored profession of providing food and fiber for our nation and the world. We are in grave danger of destroying the family farm. What will the food supply look like when it is ultimately controlled by a few mega corporations with entire departments devoted to regulatory compliance, or worse; when we are reliant on other countries for our food. Now it seems as if we are facing another "bait and switch" dilemma with the outgrowth being greater exposure to scrutiny by individuals that neither know about nor care about the individual grower's situation. Am I opposed to the location and information about my wells, Ag and domestic becoming a matter of public record? Without reservation...YES! Is it because I am afraid that it may expose some nefarious activity that I've been up to? Of course not! It's because I've been around the block enough times to realize that there are those that do operate with agendas where so called "data" is manipulated in order to create a false narrative (also known as a lie) or otherwise operate in less than the best interest of what I and the people I represent do.

Originally we were all under the impression that cooperation within a local water coalition would somewhat shield us from those with hostile agendas. We sensed the freedom to report the requested data and move on to the other issues (and reports) that are demanded of us. The proposed revisions strip away the trust built with and within the Central Valley Region and local coalitions. Doing away with data aggregation and reporting individual grower, field level data directly to the Central Valley Water Board removes a primary incentive for working with the coalition. The impact and concern for me personally would be that private confidential information about where I live would be a matter of public record.

If the goal is collection of real, materially useful information, the best source is aggregated data through the local coalition. Let them deal with violations and correcting less than best practices. If the goal is to again lean on farmers in a heavily "big brother" fashion and then expect enthusiastic participation, may I suggest that to do so is at best a very misguided and poorly conceived calculation.

The growers I represent care deeply about water quality, including the purity of the water in all of the communities in the areas that we operate within. Farmers, by nature, are problem-solvers and are happy to cooperate (and innovate) with real-world solutions for water-quality problems within those individual communities. Such cooperation is fostered by considering those in production agriculture to be assets and not liabilities in such an endeavor. I have to say that much of what is being proposed does not give one the sense that the San Joaquin Valley farmer is anything but a liability and some of us are close to thinking that we may be "persona-non grata" in our State. Such would be an unfortunate situation for what has been (at least up until now) the greatest agricultural State in the nation.

Thank you.

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Chairman, California Citrus Mutual