



Margaret Mims  
Sheriff  
Fresno County Sheriff's Office

March 7, 2014

Mr. Tom Howard  
Executive Director  
State Water Resources Control Board  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Howard:

I have become aware that the State Water Resources Control Board intends to issue an order within the next week that may significantly curtail water deliveries to agriculture in Fresno County and elsewhere in the San Joaquin Valley in an effort to address public health and safety needs that may arise in the future should the dry conditions we are now experiencing continue. As the chief law enforcement officer in Fresno County, I want to call the Board's attention to the immediate public health and safety ramifications of such an order, should it be issued.

As you are of course aware, Fresno County and its neighbors face an unprecedented water shortage in 2014. Many Fresno County farmers will receive no surface water this year, while others will receive only a fraction of normal supplies. Water supplies will be grossly inadequate to support normal agricultural production, resulting in the fallowing of a substantial portion of the County's farmland.

When farmland goes out of production, unemployment in the County sharply rises. The problem is most acute in rural communities, many of which are already disadvantaged, but unemployment will not be limited to those directly employed by farms that are idled. It is estimated that for every one on-farm job in Fresno County, there are seven more jobs in the region that rely on agriculture. The impact of idling farmland therefore ripples through communities and the County. As a result of the current water shortage, unemployment in some areas could exceed 50% this year.

I am proud to report that overall crime rates in Fresno County have been decreasing in recent years. However, during periods of high unemployment, we can predict that the impact of crime, particularly for rural crimes, may increase. For example the monetary loss of crimes directly related to agriculture rose in 2013 as compared to 2012. Even though the number of crimes may have decreased the dollar loss significantly increased. Specifically the value of metal theft rose 21%, agriculture equipment rose 24%, and chemical loss rose 56%. Food lines and hunger could become unmanageable, and already overtaxed community services will likely be stretched

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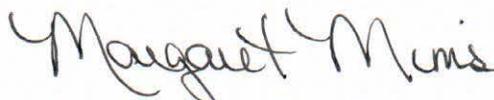
beyond the breaking point. Those become immediate problems for law enforcement and social service providers and create very real public health and safety issues.

In addition, my Department receives most of its funding from tax revenues generated within the County. When farmland is idled, the tax base shrinks and those revenues decrease. As a result, we may be hard pressed to provide even our existing level of service, much less the increased services that could easily be required to address the problems outlined above created by significantly increased unemployment.

I understand the need to consider potential health and safety issues that may arise if the current dry weather pattern continues. However, the Board needs to understand that addressing those speculative issues by further reducing irrigation water supplies will have immediate and real public health and safety ramifications. The Board thus faces a choice between addressing an unknown risk or avoiding a real and present health and safety threat.

In Fresno County, and in other rural areas of the State, there is a clear link between unemployment and public safety, and thus between water shortages and public safety. I urge the Board to consider that link and the predictable consequences of a further reduction of already inadequate water supplies before imposing further cuts in the name of health and safety.

Sincerely,



Margaret Mims, Sheriff

cc: Dianne Feinstein, U.S. Senator  
Barbara Boxer, U.S. Senator  
Jim Costa, U.S. Representative  
John Garamendi, U.S. Representative  
Devin Nunes, U.S. Representative  
Tom McClintock, U.S. Representative  
David Valadao, U.S. Representative  
Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr.  
Tom Berryhill, California State Senator  
Andy Vidak, California State Senator  
Jim Patterson, California State Assembly Member  
Henry T. Perea, California State Assembly Member  
Karen Ross, Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture  
Janelle Beland, Undersecretary, California Natural Resources Agency  
Gordon Burns, Undersecretary, California Environmental Protection Agency

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Felicia Marcus, Chair, State Water Resources Control Board  
Dorene D'Adamo, Member, State Water Resources Control Board  
Tam M. Doduc, Member, State Water Resources Control Board  
Steven Moore, Member, State Water Resources Control Board  
Frances Spivy-Weber, Vice Chair, State Water Resources Control Board  
Phil Larson, Fresno County Board of Supervisors  
Andreas Borgeas, Fresno County Board of Supervisors  
Henry R. Perea, Fresno County Board of Supervisors  
Judy Case McNairy, Fresno County Board of Supervisors  
Deborah A. Poochigian, Fresno County Board of Supervisors  
Ryan Jacobsen, Fresno County Farm Bureau  
Manuel Cunha, Nisei Farmers League