

THE CHANGE COALITION FOR WESTLANDS LANDOWNERS



October 10, 2022

Dear Friends, Neighbors and Fellow Westlands Landowners:

Since 2015, every election for the board of Westlands Water District has been contested, and each time, the 'status quo' prevailed as a majority of the Board continued to follow Staff in pursuing long-term approaches that have failed for years. Results matter and we still do not have reliable and cost-effective water. With the millions spent on legislation, litigation and lobbying, we have had either a 0% or 5% allocation in five of the last nine years. In our only two wet years in that same period, we lost over 300,000 acre-feet of water because our leadership was unprepared to store it. Now, in 2022, eight years since the passage of SGMA and nearly three years since we filed our Groundwater Sustainability Plan in January 2020, we are still confused about our SGMA rules and still unprepared for a wet winter. This is happening in Westlands while other districts continue to make progress throughout the San Joaquin Valley. This is alarming and unacceptable on multiple fronts.

In 2020, Westlands landowners spoke very clearly by voting for change candidates. But that election wasn't enough to shift the course of our district. Now, in 2022, we have another opportunity to support change candidates focused on the hard work needed to improve the future of farming in Westlands. The simple goal is to reduce the volatility of our water supplies and our water cost.

What are the strategies needed to secure this goal?

- ✓ Urgently develop or acquire underground storage controlled by Westlands and/or its landowners (i.e., recharge/banking) so that we are ready for wet and dry years, including the Winter of 2022-23
- ✓ Institute clear SGMA pumping rules and regulations and provide sufficient notice for landowners to make business and family decisions
- ✓ Reduce reliance on legal and political solutions, most of which have proven not to be durable
- ✓ Develop a strategic business plan for the district, including for the allowed acreage that does not rely on the Federal or State governments to act (e.g., retirements, conservation easements, solar, transmission, etc.)
- ✓ Improve relationships with stakeholders rather than marginalize them (e.g., DC, Sacramento, SLDMWA, neighboring water districts, moderate environmental groups, disadvantaged communities, safe drinking water advocates, etc.)

This means investing in projects and management actions where we, the Westlands landowners, have more control over the outcomes. This means landowners need to have more engagement. This also means supporting candidates for change.

For the Westlands Board, please vote for the 'Change Candidates':

- Ernie Costamagna
- Justin Diener
- Ross Franson
- Jeremy Hughes

These capable leaders share all our frustrations regarding the unreliability of our water supply and would provide new energy, vision and experience to the Board. They represent positive change.