

March 30, 2020



The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814



Dear Governor Newsom:

"[T]his is a moment we need to make tough decisions . . . We need to bend the curve in the State of California." Gov. Gavin Newsom, March 19, 2020, Speaking on Covid-19 Order.

Agriculture is an essential industry for California, socially, economically and culturally. Its importance is even more profound now during the Covid-19 Crisis. To ensure this industry, and the thousands and thousands of jobs it sustains, can continue to play an important role in California's economy, we respectfully encourage you to increase the State Water Project ("SWP") allocation to 35 percent. The aim is to enhance the economy of the San Joaquin Valley by achieving the co-equal goals of employing thousands of people in need—many living in severely disadvantaged communities—who are ready, willing and able to do jobs that only water can provide; and producing food and fiber that will ensure food security for our nation.

Farming is the primary source of employment in the San Joaquin Valley. For example, in Kings County, the January 2020 unemployment rate is 9.4 percent, compared to a 4.3 percent rate for California. Half of Kings County is classified as disadvantaged communities. The present Covid-19 Crisis is causing layoffs across nearly every sector, so these unemployment rates will almost certainly increase. An increase in the SWP allocation would increase imminent seasonal plantings, generating positive social and economic benefits for many communities. Increased plantings will require higher employment and additional hours through the harvest season, which will help alleviate the impending unemployment spike.

Storms in the past week have deposited several feet of snow onto the Sierras, which has increased the trend of the year's hydrology to nearly 70 percent of average. This March snow is a blessing, especially if the State Water Project allocation responsibly reflects this reality.

We understand there are broader, long-term legal and policy issues regarding water in California. The State of California, however, has complete control over the SWP allocation. By increasing it to a minimum of 35 percent, from its present level of 15 percent, you can alleviate immediate social and economic hardship for thousands of families and their communities throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

Regards,
[Signatures on Following Pages]



Doug Verboon, Chairman
County of Kings



Richard Valle, Supervisor Dist. 2
County of Kings



Kindon Meik, City Manager
City of Corcoran



Dusty Ference, Executive Director
Kings County Farm Bureau



Mark Gilkey, General Manager
Tulare Lake Basin Water Storage District



Dale Melville, General Manager
Dudley Ridge Water District



Silvia Maldonado, Chairperson
Kettleman City Community Services District



Melissa Whitten, City Manager
City of Avenal



Bruce Howarth, General Manager
Alpaugh Community Services District



Lance Lippincot, President/CEO
Kings County Economic Development Corporation



Scott Sills, General Manager
Empire-Westside Irrigation District



Phillip Nixon, General Manager
Berrenda Mesa Water District
Belridge Water Storage District
Lost Hills Water District



Jeof Wyrick, President
Henry Miller Water District



L. Mark Mulkay, General Manager
Kern Delta Water District



Dennis Mills, General Manager
Kings County Water District
Mid-Kings River GSA



Nathan Olsen, City Manager
City of Lemoore



LaToya Tate, General Manager
Home Garden Community Services District