



County of Fresno

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April 16, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
State Capitol Building, 1st Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: Reconsideration of Drought Declaration Status

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, we write to express our disappointment in your rejection of the bi-partisan request from our Central Valley Legislators for a Statewide Emergency Declaration on California's continuing drought condition and respectfully ask that you reconsider the decision. With this water year being the third driest on record and water allocations on the Central Valley Project initially being set at 5% and now being held without a firm date of delivery, we grow increasingly concerned that a repeat of the social and economic catastrophes of the 2014-2016 drought are a real possibility.

We applaud your leadership in recognizing the drought's impact on creating an elevated fire risk and also your aggressive response by recently making available over a half billion dollars to help prevent a repeat of the catastrophic wildfires that occurred throughout the state last year. Fires are one of the many disasters that will be realized as a result of this and future droughts. Drinking water supplies to many of our communities, most of which are disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged, are at risk. Thousands of acres of the nation's most productive farmland will go unplanted and permanent crops, including almonds, pistachios, and grapes may be abandoned. Our disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged communities, which rely heavily on agriculture for jobs, will face increased unemployment and economic hardships. All of this will occur as we Californians try and recover from the hardships caused by the pandemic. And, Fresno County has a large disadvantaged population that was among the most severely affected by the pandemic.

Agriculture is the economic engine of the San Joaquin Valley, and nowhere is that more apparent than in Fresno County. Our farmers produce over 300 commodities that supply the highest quality of food and fiber nationwide and abroad. Fresno County is home to over one million people who contribute to and/or rely upon our \$7.7 billion-dollar agricultural economy. The viability of the County's most significant economic driver, agriculture, is dependent on the availability of water.

Fresno County recently became aware of major urban water suppliers desiring to acquire large amounts of surface water on the open market to shore up their water supplies at the potential detriment to valley water users. We believe a more prudent approach would be your recognition of the imminent disaster and immediately implement drought contingency plans.

This approach is not new. In 2014, then Governor Brown early on recognized the significant potential impacts a long-standing drought could have and declared a state of emergency. Leadership for all Californians is needed at this time, and we implore you to reconsider your decision and, with haste, declare a state of emergency due to the ongoing drought conditions.

Sincerely,


Fresno County Board of Supervisors



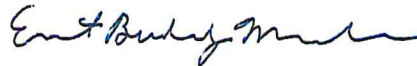
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cc: Fresno County Board of Supervisors
Fresno County Legislative Delegation
Congressman David Valadao
Senator Diane Feinstein
Paul Yoder, Legislative Advocate