



Dear water board,

My name is Andrew Danbom. I am a 61 year old high school civics and economics teacher. I am also a small farmer. My son is an agribusinessman and I would hope one of my grandchildren could also follow this honorable profession.

My ancestors came to Hilmar, California, a small town in Merced County in 1903. They moved from the midwest with the promise of climate and water. This was not an easy move: farming in our area was not easy then and not easy now. They etched their farm out of sand dunes and harsh conditions. They faced floods, droughts, wind storms, weed and insect infestations, the price swings common to agriculture, and the list goes on. Somehow they managed to survive and build a small farm to sustain a growing family.

Now our area is facing a hardship greater than any of the ones listed above. It is a hardship that cannot be beaten back by the hard work and determination that had been the cure for the hardships of the past. Of course, I am talking about the hardship of regulations. With a single stroke of pen, the work and investment of generations of Central California farmers can be erased.

My degree is in economics. The trade-offs and unintended consequences of this water grab just don't make sense. The depletion of our water rights will decimate an agricultural industry that is solely reliant on the water from the Sierra runoff. The total economic impact of this regulation will reach far beyond the fields of this productive valley. Farmers are the economic engine of the Central Valley. Almost every job in this valley can be traced back in some way to the farm economy. I'm sure you understand how taking the only major industry out of our area will impact the entire Central Valley economy. In order to grow the fruits and vegetables, farmers need a consistent, reliable source of water. Trees and vines don't live on water one year then no water the next. The exodus of our economic engine will leave a wasteland of economic despair in an already economically deprived area. I am sure you understand the way this works: if farm income is gone, farmers don't spend the farm money in town; when the town jobs are gone the productive people move away; the people who cannot move stay in poverty.

I understand having a salmon run back would be nice and replacing the Delta water that is being stolen to give to Southern California would be good, but at what price? I understand economics and have a reasonable grasp of our local water situation. I understand that every drop of water that falls in the Sierras at some point works its way down to the delta. We live in a bowl after all. The only water that escapes the system is the water that we pump out of our valley to Southern California. This is clearly the problem. I believe that the recommendations of the TID and MID to improve salmon population need to be fully explored before draconian water restrictions are imposed.

Is this water grab the best way to solve California's water problems or just the easiest? Is it easier to decimate the Central Valley or fund the infrastructure improvements that are necessary to store and deliver more water to all users? Is it easier to destroy the economy of the Central Valley because we are the poorest area of California, with a relatively weak political voice or would it be better to let Southern California solve its own water problems?

I would ask you to please come to our area, not just a drive by, but arrange to talk to local farmers and see we are excellent stewards of our land. Spend some time here get to know our local people--both farmers and all those dependent on industries and jobs that will be impacted. We are worth saving, too.

Thank you,  
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