



#31

Applicant

Ladies and Gentlemen of the State Water Resources Board,

WSP FD

My name is Gino Pedretti III. I am a 4th generation dairymen. My great grandpa bought our dairy property after emigrating from Italy in 1939. 3 generations of my family still work on our dairy and farming operations today. There is now 3 young great-great grandkids making 5 generations who could become involved with Pedretti Ranches. Our family operation is a small business employing 17 full-time employees.

I learned many years ago if you want to be successful you need to treat you employee's right. For that reason I am proud to say most of our employee's have been with us for 10, even 20+ years. They have seen me grow up and I have watched their families grow. Many of my employee's are first generation immigrates. They came to America wanting to provide a better life for their family. Because of their hard work and decication their kids have gone on to college and most come back to the Merced community working varies jobs. Because of their parents hard work and the opportunity to work in the Ag field their kids have gone on to be productive members of the Merced community.

My family, employees and I have one question for you today! How are we supposed to live our American dream if we lose 40% of the flows along the Merced River? We use this water to farm and provide jobs to the community. Your own studies have shown 1103 salmon would be saved from the 40% flow but at a cost of over 1000 jobs and in excess of 262 million dollars to the Merced Community. You are asking for 40% flows when your own study shows 20% would have the same result. This last year 1950 Chinook salmon have returned to the Merced River Salmon Hatchery. Why are you trying to increase flows when you target has already been met!

Our ranch is 15 miles south of Merced in a small town called El Nido. Only a few hundred people live in El Nido so our drinking water comes from groundwater. Over the years ground water levels have been dropping and the problem has only been magnified from the drought. Groundwater levels have dropped below were the pump is set for many domestic wells. This causes a hardship for many people in the community who do not have the tens of thousands of dollars to drill a new well. Another problem in our area is land subsidence. Land has been sinking 6 inches a year at my house and a few more miles to the south over a foot per year. Land subsidence in our area has made national news. I have been on tours of the subsidence with members of your own board. Everyone understands it is a major issues and one of the reason SIGMA's was put into law. I have a hard time comprehending how the Merced sub-basin will be able to support SIGMA and lose 40% of our spring flows!

You have to ask yourself at what cost is it to possibly save 1103 Chinook salmon? Is our community going to lose 1 job for every Chinook Salmon saved at a cost of over 250 thousand

per fish! Is my ground going to sink over 6 inches a year because we do not have the surface water! The surface water helps recharge the groundwater basin and reduces the amount of groundwater used for irrigation. Has the board even thought about the subsidence cost to the community when wells break from the ground shifting? How are housing communities going to be affected when homeowners start to see cracks in their walls. I have not seen any studies or cost associated with subsidence in your report! Will there be any mitigation to help us with these costs?

I do not want to see the Chinook Salmon go extinct. But is there a better way of working together to help come to a solution? I urged the board to listen to Merced Irrigation District and try their S.A.F.E. plan. Why not choose a plan which will not destroy the Merced community which it seems the State Water board is hell bent on doing. We in the Merced community are willing to do our part. Our irrigation district has spent millions on their plan. We want to find a solution which works for everyone. Destroying the Merced economy is not working together!

Please give us a chance to work together!

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gino Pedretti III', written in a cursive style.

Gino Pedretti III