



Westlands Water District

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STATEMENT FOR TOM BIRMINGHAM REQUEST FOR CHANGE IN ALLOCATION FORECASTING

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Today the Bureau of Reclamation announced that the water to be made available for south-of-Delta Central Valley Project agricultural water service contractors for the 2010 contract year will be only five percent. This allocation was based on a 90% exceedance forecast.

As the Department of the Interior points out in its press release, however, the water supply conditions in California are much improved compared to the last three years. Interior expects that this will be an average or above average water year. Moreover, Shasta Reservoir is presently at 98% of the historic average of storage on this date.

For these reasons and because of the catastrophic economic conditions that exist on the Westside of the San Joaquin Valley, the Westlands Water District today asked that Reclamation modify the announcement of water to be made available in order to base the allocation on the 50% exceedance forecast for all south-of-Delta CVP contractors. The livelihoods of farmers, farm workers and farm communities in the Central Valley hang in the balance.

According to the Bureau of Reclamation's estimates, this change to a 50 percent exceedance forecast would raise the allocation from five percent to thirty percent. This change is of critical importance to farmers on the Westside who must make their cropping decisions now. It will enable them to gain access to bank loans that might otherwise not have been available. And most important, it will help to ensure that the people who live and work in the Central Valley will receive some relief from the economic devastation that we suffered from the water shortages last year.

Westlands understands that any allocation is subject to change based on updated hydrologic information. If future conditions are drier than forecasted in the 50% exceedance forecast, it may be necessary to reexamine the allocation and potentially reduce it.

We are deeply grateful to Senator Dianne Feinstein and to Congressmen Jim Costa and Dennis Cardoza for their diligent and persistent efforts to secure this relief for our communities. Their continued attention to these critical issues will be required in the days and months ahead to ensure that everything that can be done is being done.

We appreciate as well the personal interest that the Secretaries of Interior and Commerce have taken in this water crisis. We are hopeful they will respond to the catastrophic losses that have been concentrated on the Westside with the flexibility and concern that is within their official discretion.

Making this change to a 50 percent exceedance is essential. Without it, the reality is that our communities would be facing a five percent allocation. Five percent means more lands will be fallowed, more people will be out of work, and more businesses will fail. We need Interior to act now to help resolve this crisis.

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