



Westlands Water District

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California Farms and Consumers in Jeopardy ***Unless State Takes Immediate Action to Address the Drought***

FRESNO – On Friday, January 03, 2014, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) conducted the first snow survey of the year. This survey confirms the severity of the water crisis. Snowpack measurements taken by DWR revealed a bleak outlook for farmers and other water dependent industries as well as consumers throughout the state.

Despite joint federal and state project facilities designed to provide a stable water supply for 25 million Californians and a third of California's farmland, the management of the water facilities has failed to achieve the goal. Layers and layers of regulation, court decisions and administrative inaction have left Californians without a reliable system, and drought conditions have worsened each cycle. Ironically, the current crisis could have been lessened if the federal and state regulators had acted to capture in the early part of the last water year 800,000 acre-feet that could have been used by California consumers, but instead flowed into the ocean.

"Over the past several months, with reservoirs at near record low levels, Westlands has braced its growers for an initial zero allocation. Friday's announcement makes that prediction a virtual certainty. Without an adequate water supply, an estimated 200,000 acres of prime agriculture land (which equates to 300 square miles of barren dirt) will remain unplanted on the Westside of Fresno County. But it is not just the farmers that will suffer; farmworkers, communities, businesses, and California consumers will feel the full impact of the drought and the regulatory failures," said Tom Birmingham, general manager of Westlands Water District.

Water is an economic engine for rural communities in the Central Valley. This crisis demonstrates the need for workable solutions that address the immediate situation and long-term solution that will prevent these reoccurring droughts that disrupt our economy and harm our agriculture industry. We are seeing the failures of this generation to wisely manage our precious water resources and the consequences of these failures in the most painful of ways.

Westlands remains committed to seek solutions by continuing to meet with public officials at all levels to assess what actions can be taken to provide immediate relief to mitigate the impacts of this disaster.

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