



Westlands Water District

3130 N. Fresno Street, P.O. Box 6056, Fresno, California 93703-6056, (559) 224-1523, FAX (559) 241-6277

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT : Sarah Woolf

559-341-0174

April 21, 2009

**California needs a water system for the 21st century
*Putting our people back to work, restoring reliability, and providing an affordable and
adequate water supply for our future needs.***

Today, Thomas Birmingham, General Manager of Westlands Water District, made the following comment about the Bureau of Reclamation's announcement of a 10% allocation for south-of-Delta Central Valley Project irrigation contractors: In the present circumstances, every drop of water counts and we appreciate getting this ten percent allocation. However, in terms of increased acreage under production, a ten percent allocation won't do much for farmers, farm workers, or small business affected by the low water allocation. It will mean that farmers who otherwise would use groundwater to irrigate orchards or vineyards will now be able to reduce pumping of groundwater.

The District is continuing to work with Reclamation and DWR to implement a number of actions that would enable Reclamation to move additional water through the Delta for delivery to our farmers, and I am very hopeful that next month the allocation will increase. Unless the allocation is increased there will be little, if any relief for the farmers who depend on these supplies or the tens of thousands of working families who are now without jobs because of the existing water shortage. The government's announcement today is not going to reduce the unemployment levels that have blighted our communities or shorten the lines at our local food banks.

In Westlands Water District hundreds of thousands of acres of productive farmlands have already been fallowed. Millions of dollars worth of orchards have been pulled out and destroyed.

Thousands of people from all over the Central Valley marched together last week to send a simple message to Washington and Sacramento – the government cannot continue to ignore the impact of the water supply crisis on people.

The drought continues. But we have faced droughts before and managed them much better. The problem is that the rules have changed.

The largest part of California's developed water supply doesn't go to serve the farms or cities any more. Nearly half of our freshwater supplies have been redirected instead to benefit fish and habitat and a host of other environmental purposes that were not even imagined when the water system was built.

The ten percent allocation announced today will yield approximately 119,000 acre feet of water for Westlands. But because of new environmental restrictions imposed by the Fish & Wildlife Service in December 2008, the Central Valley Project and the State Water

Project have already sent almost 300,000 acre feet of water to waste into the ocean in just the first three months of this year.

The lesson here is simple. It was written on the faces of the thousands of people who marched last week. California needs a water system for the 21st century that will put our people back to work, restore reliability, and provide an adequate water supply for our future needs.
