

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 6, 2008

The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary
Department of Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Kempthorne:

As a Congressional delegation, we want to begin this letter with a deep and sincere expression of thanks to the Department of Interior for the Herculean efforts on the part of its staff at the Mid-Pacific Division of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in Sacramento, CA. The staff at Mid-Pacific is to be commended for their diligent efforts to quantify and equitably distribute what is proving to be a very volatile and elusive supply of water. We are writing to request the Department of the Interior supply resources and staffing to maximize all available water supplies and strategies to California water users during this current period of extreme drought.

As you are well aware by now, California is again in an extended period of water shortages. On the heels of a very dry year in 2007, California is in the midst of yet another below average rainfall year. After a dry fall punctuated by two months of fair precipitation, California has now experienced the driest March, April and May on record. The snow packs which once held promise for the 2008 irrigation season have literally evaporated. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation estimates that adequate run-off supplies are no longer available to meet project needs and thus has instituted drought condition reductions to Central Valley Project water users. These reductions are coupled with previously anticipated shortages and already low allocations resulting from the combination of the 2007 dry year and shortages resulting from court ordered reductions in the pumping operations in the Delta to protect endangered or threatened fish. These projected shortfalls in supply will translate into crops being lost.

California agriculture has already fallowed significant acreage because of the continuous erosion of water supplies. Growers throughout the state plant crops based on water delivery forecasts and promised allocations which now will not be deliverable. Though not yet estimated, significant losses are expected to accrue. These additional drought measures by the Bureau have put San Joaquin Valley agriculture in a tail-spin. Many growers now find themselves in the position of not having enough allotment for this growing season. Hard-working farmers and farm-workers stand to suffer significant economic hardship. Many growers face the prospect of losing their entire operations.

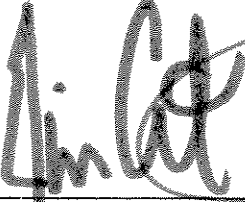
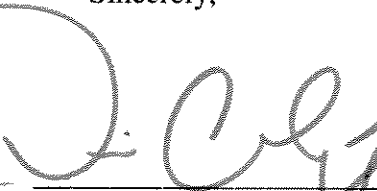
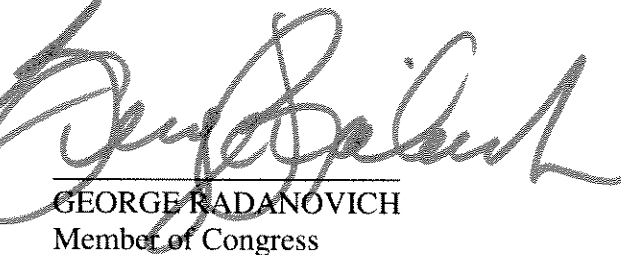
The ripple effect on communities dependent on agriculture will also compound the pain. Lost crops equal lost jobs and thereby lost revenue to already struggling communities. Workers dependent on wages from agriculture are especially hard hit. These individuals and their families already endure a disproportionate burden of the steadily rising costs of living, including

such necessities as gasoline and food. In addition, San Joaquin counties have consistently ranked as the top counties in the nation in foreclosures. When agriculture struggles, rural populations struggle, and the net effect is that whole communities are devastated. In the final analysis, the entire economy of the state of California will struggle because of this.

As a delegation, we urge your Department to apply all diligence to provide the leadership necessary to anticipate and thereby deal with this crisis. We ask Interior to provide the resources and staffing to insure the greatest flexibility and maximization of all available water supplies and strategies. We also encourage Interior to make every effort to streamline the water transfer processes, and to work with the State Water Project to identify and gain access to all available supply options. We are encouraging the Governor's office to enjoin state agencies to relax or temporarily provide flexibility in state water regulations, and we ask Interior to make efforts to pursue the state's cooperation in this. In the event of economic damages resulting from these water shortages, we would ask Interior to help provide timely and adequate information and assistance to the federal and state agencies tasked with supporting those suffering losses. Above all, we encourage Interior to direct the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to communicate clearly and often with affected water users and agencies. Even with everyone working together and engaged in the process, we will not be able to avert all adverse impacts, but it will go a long way toward minimizing potential impacts and conflict.

Any losses to the California agriculture industry will ultimately have nationwide impacts. Immediate preventative actions by United States Department of Interior will help minimize those adverse results. We urge your immediate attention to this crisis and look forward to working with you to provide California agriculture and its disadvantaged communities the support they so desperately need and deserve. We also request a meeting with you and your staff to further discuss this situation and the actions to be taken by the Department.

Sincerely,

		
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JIM COSTA Member of Congress	DENNIS CARDOZA Member of Congress	GEORGE RADANOVICH Member of Congress

CC: Robert W. Johnson, Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
Donald R. Glaser, Mid-Pacific Regional Director, Bureau of Reclamation