

# CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

STATE CAPITOL  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA  
95814

April 7, 2021

Governor Gavin Newsom  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Request for Statewide Emergency Declaration on California's Drought**

Dear Governor Newsom:

As Chairs of the Senate and Assembly Agriculture Committees, we submit to you the following request for a statewide declaration of emergency. In light of the recent water allocation announcement to California farmers and growers, we are writing to share our concerns and respectfully request that your administration take steps to address this pending statewide emergency. California produces half of the nation's livestock and produce products, which are an essential part of our economy and a crucial aspect of our national security.

In March of 2020 at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, frontline workers in the agricultural industry stepped up to keep food on the table for our state and nation. The pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of our food supply chain and highlighted the importance of food and water security to prevent California's reliance on foreign imports.

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR), in conjunction with your administration, announced a five-percent allocation to farmers and growers on March 23, 2021. It is not without coincidence that this was also National Agriculture Day. This will weaken California's food supply chain, and endanger underserved communities that depend upon clean, reliable water.

Droughts are obviously not new to this state. We had similar drought conditions in 2014, when allocations to the State Water Project (SWP) were reduced to 5%. At that time, the Governor declared a state of emergency in order to provide flexibility and commonsense streamlining to utilize our limited water in the most efficient way possible. These temporary measures acknowledged that during severe droughts, the state has to be able to provide water to the 27 million Californians and 750,000 acres of farmland currently served by the SWP.

California's Central Valley legislators want to be a part of the solution to protect California's rural communities. Therefore, the Chairs of the Senate and Assembly Agriculture Committees and the undersigned request the following:

1) **Statewide Emergency Declaration:**

Approximately 1 million acres of San Joaquin Valley farmland is expected to be fallowed over two to three decades because of reduced ground and surface water availability. California is also expected to shed approximately 85,000 jobs as a direct result of reduced water access – not including indirect job loss from supporting industries. By providing agencies more flexibility under a state of emergency order, state agencies and stakeholders can work together to adapt to this challenging, but temporary, situation. All tools should be available to incentivize water conservation, minimizing red tape for water transfers, and allowing state agencies to modify certain reservoir release standards to allow for more water to go to communities throughout the state.

2) **Consultation with Department of Water Resources Officials:**

Members of the Legislature representing the San Joaquin Valley should be extended the opportunity to provide input with your administration. Counties such as Fresno, Tulare, Kern, Kings, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Monterey and others are expected to endure the largest losses in employment under drought conditions and reduced water access. We respectfully request a meeting to discuss the impact these water restrictions will have on California's underrepresented communities.

3) **Financial Assistance for Food Producers:**

An estimated \$7.2 billion in annual farm revenue loss is expected to occur given reduced surface and ground water access for food producers. Given California's unanticipated revenue of \$14.3 billion, California's food producers should be provided financial assistance to sustain their operation through the drought.

In conclusion, we believe that these steps will allow California's farmers and farmworkers to continue to receive the water necessary to provide food for our state and nation as well as clean drinking water. On behalf of California's agricultural communities, we sincerely appreciate your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,



ANDREAS BORGEAS  
Chair, Senate Agriculture Committee



ROBERT RIVAS  
Chair, Assembly Agriculture Committee



SHANNON GROVE  
16<sup>th</sup> Senate District



ANNA CABALLERO  
12<sup>th</sup> Senate District



VINCE FONG  
34<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



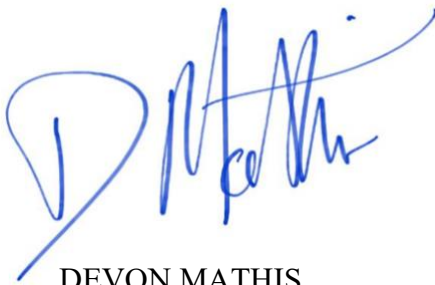
FRANK BIGELOW  
5<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



HEATH FLORA  
12<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



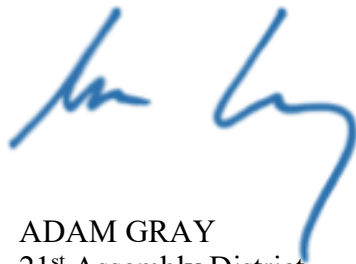
JIM PATTERSON  
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RUDY SALAS  
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21<sup>st</sup> Assembly District

Cc: President pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins  
Speaker Anthony Rendon  
Senator Nancy Skinner  
Assembly Member Phil Ting