

California State Senate

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SENATOR
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HEALTH
VETERANS AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE
BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 3
ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

July 27, 2021

E. Joaquin Esquivel, Chair
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Resolution NO. 2021--Proposed Emergency Water Curtailment

Dear Mr. Esquivel,

As you consider adopting Resolution Number 2021, the Emergency Curtailment and Reporting Regulation for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) Watershed, I urge you to consider the impacts this curtailment will have on low-income Central Valley communities and the agricultural industry that supports these communities.

This unprecedented proposed order would cut vital water supplies to California farms that have already been forced to comply with reduced water allocations in response to California's worsening drought. As a result of limited water, some farmers have chosen to fallow large segments of their farmland. The Public Policy Institute of California estimates that by 2040 the San Joaquin Valley alone is projected lose over 500,000 acres of agricultural land to fallowing, which is potentially a low estimate if extreme drought conditions persist. Fallowed land means less food for our State, for the Nation, and for the globe. It means increases in food prices and decreases in availability of produce. It also means an increase in unemployment for many farmworkers and a major reduction in economic output for many communities in the Central Valley, compounding losses suffered as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Nowhere will this order have a greater impact than my Central Valley Senate District. I represent three of the top agricultural producing counties in the United States. Grocery stores throughout the United States sell our fruit, vegetables and nuts. Our dairy, cattle and poultry producers feed millions every day. The jobs associated with this industry sustain modest, but crucial, economic opportunities for our rural communities.

While bold action is no doubt needed in the face of historically dry conditions in the Western United States, the Board should also consider the impact this order will have on California food production, international agricultural markets and – most importantly – rural, immigrant communities that rely on Delta watershed supplies for drinking water and economic well-being.

As the Board considers its next actions to ensure human needs are met first during these unprecedented times, I urge you and the rest of the board to consider the economic and human impacts that the Board's emergency curtailment order will have on the millions of Central Valley residents who depend on this industry for their livelihoods, and the very real human impact that less water will have on America's food supply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melissa Hurtado". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Melissa Hurtado
Senator, 14th District