



February 16, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor
State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

California's dairy farm families are increasingly troubled and concerned with escalating water scarcity in the state. The state's ongoing water supply crisis is worsening and threatening critical food production, as well as the economic health of rural regions throughout the state.

After years of drought, the early winter storms across much of California have provided desperately needed rain and snow. While these storms caused unfortunate destruction in many areas of the state, they also provided opportunity for our drought-stricken state that has been operating under multiple states of emergency for several years.

Unfortunately, during the recent storms the State Water Project pumping facilities—which provide the lifeblood to many of our family farms in the San Joaquin Valley and across the state—were only operating at one-third of capacity. Capturing those peak flows could have provided critical supplies for recharging thousands of acres of farmland, or millions of residents. We cannot afford to continue to let opportunities to capture and store water pass us by.

We must improve our water conveyance and storage capabilities to take advantage of periods of high precipitation. Investing in infrastructure improvements is critical for the state's water security and the economy of chronic high unemployment and poverty regions such as the San Joaquin Valley. It is equally critical that we are able to put these infrastructure investments to use to protect the long-term sustainability of our dairy farms and the processing facilities and allied industries that depend on them.

While we cannot recoup the water that we failed to capture last month, we must quickly learn from such missed opportunities going forward. While the state and federal pumps are now operating at or near full capacity, there are additional restrictions that could be imposed in the coming months that could again limit the ability to capture and utilize high flows.

Potential rainstorms and warmer spring months ahead will undoubtedly melt historic amounts of snowpack and significant flows will again move through the Delta. As a result, we must be able to seize opportunities to replenish reservoirs and groundwater aquifers south of the Delta.

California's dairy farm families implore your administration to work with federal regulators to find creative and flexible solutions to store these abundant and available supplies in the coming weeks and months. Solutions such as utilizing real time monitoring to determine whether protected species are actually in harm's way, can help to capture high flows while still protecting the estuary's native fish.

We also support exploration of the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley's proposed resiliency projects. In particular, we support exploration of the Environmentally Friendly Water Diversions project, that could allow for the full utilization of precious water resources without impacting fish. Additionally, we support the Blueprint's Southern San Joaquin Water Resiliency Project, a new bidirectional canal, feeding the center of the Valley, supporting rural communities and wildlife refuges, and connecting to groundwater recharge projects throughout the Valley, thereby providing sustainability to groundwater basins and promoting long-term resiliency.

California's dairy farm families have continued to invest in sustainability practices that have tremendously increased our water use efficiency. However, even the most efficient farms will still need a reliable water supply to continue to operate. California now has an important opportunity to make the necessary investments to secure adequate water supplies for residents, farms, and businesses throughout the state. The state must improve its water infrastructure and operational procedures to ensure a sustainable future for our communities.

Sincerely,



Rob Vandenheuvel
Senior Vice President, Member & Industry Relations
California Dairies, Inc.



Melvin Medeiros
Chairman
Dairy Farmers of America- Western Area



David Ahlem
CEO
Hilmar Cheese Company, Inc.



Pete Kappelman
SVP, Member and Government Relations
Land O' Lakes, Inc.

Glenn Wallace

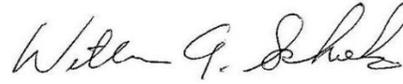
Glenn Wallace
CEO
Valley Milk LLC



Jim Houston
Administrator
California Farm Bureau Federation



Kevin Abernathy
General Manager
Milk Producers Council



William Schiek
Executive Director
Dairy Institute of California



Lynne McBride
Executive Director
California Dairy Campaign



Stephen J. Shehadey
Owner
Bar 20 Dairy Farms

CC:

Director Karla Nemeth
Director Chuck Bonham
State Water Resources Control Board
California State Senate
California State Assembly
Congressman Kevin McCarthy, Speaker of the House of Representatives
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Alex Padilla