



CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

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August 21, 2013

The Honorable Anthony Rendon, PhD, Chair
Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee
1020 N Street, Suite 160
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: 2013 WATER BOND FRAMEWORK

Dear Assemblymember Rendon:

On behalf of our 74,000 farm families and individual members, the California Farm Bureau Federation appreciates the opportunity to provide the following comments on the 2013 Water Bond Framework developed by the Water Bond Working Group.

Farm Bureau's purposes are, among others, to work for the solution of the problems of the farm, the farm home and the rural community throughout California and to protect and advance the social, economic and educational interests of California farmers. Farm Bureau strives to protect and improve the ability of farmers and ranchers engaged in production agriculture to provide safe, reliable, and healthful food and farm products through responsible stewardship of California's diverse natural resource base. A clean and reliable water supply statewide is essential to the State's economy and the maintenance of a local food supply.

Over a four-year period, significant resources from a diverse group of stakeholders and interests were invested in the development of the current water bond. We believe working from the same basic framework is the best way of moving forward. In 2009, a comprehensive water package of four policy bills and one funding bill passed the Legislature and were signed by the Governor. The four policy bills are current law and are being implemented without necessary funding. As a point of departure in discussing a water bond, Farm Bureau believes a truly comprehensive water package must contain sufficient funding.

With respect to infrastructure and a water bond, it is apparent to us that California cannot conserve its way out of the current water challenges. It is certainly true that many sectors have made great strides in conserving and using water more efficiently in recent years. In agriculture, for example, production volume increased 89 percent between 1967 and 2000, at the same time, applied water for agricultural uses increased only 9.6 percent, primarily due to acreage increases. Yet there are limits to what any sector of water use can accomplish in terms of conservation, particularly in the face of extraordinary supply and demand challenges. In addition to the ever-increasing population of the State and increased implementation of environmental policy which calls for a re-commitment of surface water supplies to instream uses, climate change is exacerbating the supply-side stress on our water supply: projections call for a dramatically decreasing and less reliable Sierra snowpack, as well as "flashier" river systems as watersheds receive rain instead of snow.

It seems self-evident, therefore, that new water storage options are a critical necessity from a water management standpoint, to include not only management of surface supply systems to capture excess flows when they are available, but also groundwater recharge functions. Four of the surface water storage projects that have been most discussed - raising Shasta Dam to augment the supply in Shasta Reservoir, the construction of Sites Reservoir, raising Los Vaqueros Reservoir, and the construction of Temperance Flat Reservoir - would collectively increase water storage capacity for public, agricultural and environmental needs by approximately four million acre feet. Additional stored water and flood capacity is simply a must if we are going to meet the State's water and flood management needs into the 21st century.

Water bond funds should remain for the public benefit portion of any project, up to 50 percent. In addition, funding for new storage projects should be continuously appropriated. Without continuous appropriation, the competitive review and approval process for sound projects would be unacceptably uncertain, and could put all Californians and the environment at even greater risk.

Another high priority in the water bond should be a funding commitment to drinking water solutions for the economically disadvantaged communities that do not have safe drinking water. Because there are many contaminants, such as naturally occurring arsenic, chromium 6, perchlorate and nitrate, a comprehensive solution is needed with a comprehensive funding source. It bears observation that this was the number one recommendation of the fifteen submitted to the Legislature earlier this year by the State Water Board and identified as the most immediate need. This is a critical issue that needs to be addressed by the water bond.

Overall, Farm Bureau believes the \$5 billion, five-category framework lacks the dollars necessary to move California's water infrastructure into the 21st Century. The framework also lacks the necessary clarifying policy language to protect agriculture, including a commitment to the protection of area of origin water rights. Finally, we believe that policy language should be included to provide that water bond dollars are not to be used to build conveyance facilities currently contemplated as part of the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan process. Therefore, we respectfully submit that the \$8.2 billion ACWA water bond proposal is an alternative proposal which better aligns proposed funding with the state's water infrastructure needs. That proposal addresses the needs identified above and includes necessary minimum levels of funding for new storage and drinking water projects.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Danny Merkley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Danny" being more prominent than the last name "Merkley".

Danny Merkley
Director of Water Resources

cc: Members, Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee
Members, Water Bond Working Group
Tina Cannon Leahy, Principal Consultant, Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee
Doug Haaland, Assembly Republican Caucus