

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Jason Phillips
Chief Executive Officer

I realize this is a massive understatement, but it's been a strange and busy 2020.

Historically, during the first few months of every year, among many other things, FWA staff spend time working with the US Bureau of Reclamation to ensure the Friant Division allocation is maximized. Just over a week ago, Reclamation announced an update to the initial Friant allocation for the second time this year. After starting the year with a 20% allocation for Class 1 supplies, the announcement increased the Class 1 allocation to 55%. Based on our modeling and analysis of the hydrology so far this year, and all of the other factors that Reclamation needs to consider when making these decisions, we think 55% is a fair allocation at this time.

Obviously, what has made this a strange year is the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Like so many others, we have altered the manner in which we conduct our business, which hasn't been easy, but we have adapted well. Given the circumstances and what we have been forced to deal with, I am very proud of the FWA team's dedication to their responsibility to serve the eastside farmers and communities that rely on their efforts to keep the water flowing.

Adding to the strange nature of 2020 has been the action taken by the state of California in recent months. Astonishingly, the State of California filed a lawsuit (CNRA v. Ross) against the Federal government on February 20, 2020, challenging the Record of Decision on the Long-Term Operations of the Central Valley Project that Reclamation signed on Feb. 18, 2020. If successful, the states' effort would replace the 2019 BiOps, which were developed using the best available science, by career

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IN THE NEWS

TOILET PAPER SHORT -- FOOD ABUNDANT

by Dan Walters - CAL MATTERS | APRIL 15, 2020

The first few days of the coronavirus crisis revealed that the veneer of civilization may be thinner than we assumed.

Americans quickly stripped supermarket shelves of toilet paper, paper towels and other household commodities. The panicky, almost riotous, invasion of shoppers even moved one Sacramento grocery chain to hire off-duty police officers to stand by and keep order.

Several weeks later, toilet paper is still in short supply, but stores still have adequate, if not overly abundant, stocks of a much more important commodity – food. Farmers, farmworkers, truckers, food processors and grocers have continued to do their vital work, often at the personal risk of becoming infected.

What would happen were the situations to be reversed, with shelves of food empty while those with toilet paper still stocked? It would get very ugly very quickly and history tells us that the survival instinct would kick in and other commodities folks also have been stockpiling – guns and ammunition – would come into play.

That scenario, thankfully, is highly unlikely to occur, but we should be aware that the incredibly complex system that delivers foodstuffs to stores and then to our tables is feeling the strain.

The closure of restaurants, schools and other commercial purchasers of food is a heavy financial blow to everyone in the system. Farmers are plowing up fields of lettuce and other fresh produce for a lack of workers to harvest them, and customers to buy what they harvest. Dairy farmers still must milk their cows, but many are dumping what they produce due to sharply reduced demand not only for fluid milk but cheese and other dairy products too.

California is, as everyone should know, the nation's top agricultural producer, but we have often tended to take that fact for granted. In certain circles – especially among

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EVENTS AROUND THE VALLEY

MAY 28
FWA Board of Directors Meeting
Via WebEx

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JUNE 10-11
3rd Annual GSA Summit

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JUNE 17
California Water Commission

Sacramento, CA

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JULY 28-31
ACWA Summer Conference

Monterey, CA

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scientists and staff within the federal government, with those issued in 2008 and 2009 that the CVP and State Water Project have been operating under for more than a decade. As a reminder, the data has shown the 2008 and 2009 BiOps failed on many fronts, but most significantly, they failed the water users of the state, and the fish and wildlife whose populations have been on a steady decline of the past decade. Because of this, FWA filed a motion to intervene in *CNRA v. Ross* on behalf of the Federal government to defend the 2019 BiOps.

As if that wasn't frustrating enough, and adding to the drama, the state of California made the decision to issue a separate Incidental Take Permit (ITP) for operations of the State Water Project. What this means is that for the first time in history, the Federal and State water projects, which provide water for almost 30 million people and thousands of farms, are being operated in an uncoordinated, conflicting, and frankly, confusing manner. This decision by the state has generated an enormous amount of opposition from agencies and organizations (FWA included) representing water users up and down the state, and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern CA and the State Water Contractors Association. It has also drawn opposition from a broad and bipartisan group of state and federal legislators. The opposition coalition looks similar to the coalition that opposed and helped secure a veto of Senate Bill 1 (SB1) in 2019. Which begs the question... if the Newsom Administration thought SB1 was bad water policy in 2019 (bad enough to require his veto signature, by the way), what has changed? Only time, and lawsuits unfortunately, will tell.

Needless to say, for next month's edition of the FWA eWaterline, I hope to be able to report back with more positive news. But regardless, we will provide an update so that you are aware of what's happening regarding California's water supply.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read April 3, 2020 letter from State Legislature to Governor Newsom regarding ITP

[CLICK HERE](#) to read April 7, 2020 letter from Congress to Governor Newsom regarding ITP

[CLICK HERE](#) to read April 15, 2020 letter from Congress to Governor Newsom regarding coordinated operations

[CLICK HERE](#) to read April 20, 2020 letter from Metropolitan Water District to DFW and DWR regarding ITP

[CLICK HERE](#) to read April 28, 2020 letter to Senator Feinstein from Interior Secretary Bernhardt

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environmental and social justice activists – farmers are dismissed as greedy despoilers. They wrongly imply that there's no need for large-scale industrial agriculture, and that small-scale organic farmers can meet our needs.

This crisis should tell us otherwise and whenever it ends, we should emerge with a new appreciation for those who grow, harvest, process and deliver our food – and show that regard in tangible ways.

We should end the decades of bickering over water and build the new storage and conveyance projects that will give farmers what they need to maintain and enhance production as well as meet the demands of families and other water users.

We should honor the men and women who work in the fields while most of us shelter in place to avoid infection. They should be fairly paid for performing the difficult and often hazardous tasks that put food on our tables, even if it means higher retail prices.

We should, as with water, end the decades of bickering over immigration and provide undocumented immigrants – as many as three million in California alone – who work in the fields, in construction and in myriad other important industries a dignified pathway out of the shadows and into legalized status and citizenship.

Concurrently, we should make it easier and more lucrative for foreign nationals who wish to work seasonally in California agriculture to come here. It's shameful that President Donald Trump's administration is contemplating a reduction in guest worker wages to ease the financial burden on farmers. That sends precisely the wrong message because a shortage of reliable labor is one of agriculture's biggest headaches.

Some say the coronavirus crisis changes everything. It should change our complacent and sometimes hostile attitudes about agriculture.

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From The Sun: [Bernhardt: Newsom's water gambit "potentially unlawful"](#)

From The Sun: [In new filing, Becerra seeks to halt Trump's Valley water boost](#)

From the Department of Water Resources: [California enters summer with precipitation and snowpack below average](#)

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