

# Farmland Working Group

*Striving to protect food, families & farmland. Since 1999.*

## FIGHTING THE WATER GRAB!



### Mike Dunbar: Would you like some facts, or do you prefer to remain all wet?

Dear Editor of The Los Angeles Times,

We know opinion journalists often draw different conclusions from the same facts. But we have some problems with both the conclusions you've drawn and the "facts" you cited in your editorial, "Letting California's rivers run isn't a 'water grab'."

After chiding San Francisco over insufficient environmental karma, you turned your pious gaze on us Valley yokels. You chastised us for being unwilling to save the rivers that have nourished us – and you, through our vegetables, melons, wines, nuts, cheese, tree fruit, etc. You portrayed us as part of a villainous "agribusiness," perhaps not realizing the average farm size in Stanislaus County is 175 acres, and three quarters of all farms here are under 100 acres. For that matter, why is "big ag" any greedier than big movies, big bio-tech or big banking, some of your big industries?

Relying on your great knowledge of farming economics, you advised us to grow "less thirsty" crops – a cheap shot at all the almonds we grow. Did you realize that two crops of corn (the norm) requires more water than a single

crop of almonds? That it takes eight times more water (1,800 gallons) to produce your \$100 jeans than it does to fill a bag of almonds of the same weight?

Then you blame diversions from the Tuolumne for crippling "the state's once great ocean fishing fleets and seafood processors." That's my favorite. Usually, your writers accompany such statements by citing a study that said commercial salmon fishing was a \$1.4 billion per year business. That number came from a company specializing in studies for environmental groups.

In the year cited, California commercial fishers caught 1,032,000 pounds of salmon. You think a pound of salmon generates \$1,400 in economic activity?

Apparently, you take everything said by the State Water Resources Control Board as gospel. Chairwoman Felicia Marcus is smart, quick-witted and was once one of your city's bureaucrats before going to work for the oh-so-altruistic Natural Resources Defense Council (never mind allegations of sue-and-settle tactics and a \$50 million payroll). She and former water board staffer Tam Doduc wouldn't possibly color the facts, leave out pertinent data, discard valid peer-reviewed science and link one arm with professional environmentalists and the other with Beverly Hills farmers and developers to move water south.

Then you bow your head and admit Los Angeles once sinned against nature, draining Owens Valley and the Mono basin. You don't mention that you've only recently been forced to stop taking more than your share of the Colorado River.

Is that why you want more from the Delta? You said as much in April when you insisted Gov. Jerry Brown's tunnels be built. By portraying some of California's

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**Our Mission:** To preserve the agricultural foundation of our region and promote smart growth in our urban communities through education, outreach and action.

# Why have hearings if state water board isn't going to listen?

By The Modesto Bee Editorial Board - August 26, 2018



For those in the environmental movement, the State Water Resources Control Board hearings Tuesday and Wednesday were like an episode of "Friends," all warm, witty welcomes. For the people from the Northern San Joaquin Valley, it was like watch-

The other side offered, well, a lot of emotion. One literally broke into tears. If they had data, most of it was outdated. After two 10-hour days of testimony, some observations:

The final 90 minutes were crucial, but centered on arcane details. Dorene D'Adamo – the only board member who combines a farming background and deep water-policy expertise – started questioning staff about the rules around "carryover" storage. She worried about language

**Dorene D'Adamo – the only board member who combines a farming background and deep water-policy expertise – started questioning staff about the rules around "carryover" storage... "Who decides how much to store, she asked."**

suggesting the state could take over operations of the reservoirs, resulting in zero water for farmers – especially in drought years. Who decides how much to store, she asked. A staff

member answered it would be up to a committee that includes water board staff, water district employees and, possibly, others. Like professional environmentalists...

So D'Adamo asked again, "How much carryover?" She never got a real answer...

*read complete article:*

<https://www.modbee.com/opinion/editorials/article217318655.html>

ing the movie "Defending Your Life."

The water board is considering a long-awaited staff plan to send 40 to 50 percent of the Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Merced rivers to the ocean. Such flows, say those testifying from this region, would be utterly destructive – killing jobs, forcing farmers to fallow fields and vastly diminishing the services public officials can provide. They backed up their warnings with facts, figures, computer modeling and law books.

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poorest and hardest-laboring people as greedy fish-killers, do you figure you'll use the water more wisely?

If you really, truly want to help the Delta and save salmon, you can. All you have to do is turn off those Delta pumps once in awhile.

Instead, you complain that our rivers are sometimes reduced "to a mere trickle." Did you bother to check? At the height of summer, the "mere trickle" coming out of Tulloch Reservoir on the Stanislaus was 1,642 cubic feet (12,282 gallons) per second on Thursday; it was 1,891 cfs (14,441 gallons) on the Tuolumne, and 1,696 cfs on the Merced. Much of that goes for irrigation, but a significant portion is remaining in the rivers.

If we increased instream flows by 60 percent tomorrow, only around 2,100 cubic feet per second of additional water would enter the Delta. Sounds like a lot, until you compare it to the amount leaving the Delta.

Since 1991, your giant pumps have been sending up to 15,000 cubic feet per second down two man-made rivers toward Los Angeles. That's when the Delta started getting saltier. By 2009, the National Marine Fisheries Services was blaming water exports for killing the fish.

By the way, how's the fishing in that cement ditch you call the Los Angeles River?

We are restoring our rivers, using wastewater for farming and vastly improving irrigation techniques. We don't mind reasonably increasing flows, but that alone won't work.

Just ask renowned scientist Peter Moyle, who blogged in the midst of the water board hearings, "increased flows are not likely to increase (salmon) survival."

Or ask equally renowned scientist Jay Lund, who said relying on flows to fix any river's problems is "scientifically lazy."

Read the peer-reviewed study that found salmon prefer mid-range, not massive, river flows.

Check the irrigation districts who built restoration projects on the Stanislaus that already have resulted in a three-fold increase in salmon without additional flows.

Or ask the state regulators who want to control our rivers how they managed to kill thousands of salmon on the Sacramento River in 2014 and trout on the Stanislaus in 2016.

Next time you set about burnishing your green cred by attacking us, check the facts. They're fascinating.

*Mike Dunbar is editorial page editor of The Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star. Read more here: <https://www.modbee.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/mike-dunbar/article217295560>*



# Alison Divis – 2018 Scholarship Recipient

## James C. Enochs High School, Modesto



### SCHOLARSHIP

#### APPLICATION PROMPT –

Explore the following topic: “Recently, Stanislaus County LAFCo (Local Agency Formation Commission) approved a request from the City of Riverbank to expand its Sphere of Influence (SOI) east and

west. The easterly direction is mostly inferior soils; the westerly expansion is on prime farmland. Given the charge of this Commission to protect our best farmland, should LAFCo have approved the expansion in both directions? Why?”

LAFCo Should Not Have Approved Expansion in Both Directions Given the charge of the Stanislaus County Local Agency Formation Commission to protect the best farmland, LAFCo was incorrect in approving the expansion of the City of Riverbank’s Sphere of Influence to both the east and west. Expansion in either direction goes against the goals of LAFCo, especially in the westward direction. LAFCo should have approved expansion in only the easterly direction, if they had to approve anything at all.

Allowing expansion in the westerly direction contradicts everything LAFCo stands for. One goal of LAFCo is to “guide development away from agricultural lands,” and allowing urban expansion in the westerly direction onto prime farmland does just the opposite. Essentially, LAFCo is throwing away perfectly good farmland and turning it over for urban expansion. Additional goals of LAFCo include minimizing the use of agricultural land for alterna-

tive purposes and continuing the use of those lands for agricultural purposes. When land is ideal for agricultural purposes, as is the land in the westerly direction, it would be sensible of LAFCo to continue using that land for such purposes, rather than approving the expansion of a city’s Sphere of Influence into that land.

Although the easterly direction may consist primarily of inferior soils, it is not in LAFCo’s best interest to allow the City of Riverbank’s Sphere of Influence to expand in that direction either. As part of LAFCo’s Agricultural Preservation Policy, they have a goal to discourage the spread of urbanized areas. Even though the eastern direction may consist of inferior soils, not allowing expansion in this area would still prevent further spread of land used for urbanization purposes. Additionally, further urbanization affects surrounding farmland outside of a city’s Sphere of Influence because of the pollution associated with urbanizing an area.

Despite the benefits of not allowing the City of Riverbank’s Sphere of Influence to spread in the easterly direction, approving expansion in this direction is more preferable than allowing spread in the westerly direction. If expansion is absolutely needed for important services, then approving expansion in only the easterly direction provides a balance between preserving agricultural land and allowing land for significant urban developments, as promoting such a balance is also a goal of LAFCo. Thus, if expansion of the City of Riverbank’s Sphere of Influence must be granted at all, choosing only to grant expansion in the easterly direction would have been LAFCo’s best option.

To conclude, LAFCo should not have approved expansion in both directions. If anything, they should have opted to allow expansion only in the easterly direction in order to reduce the loss of optimum farmland in the westerly direction while still allowing for land needed for any necessary urbanization in the easterly direction.

by Alison Divis



The Tuolumne River



## WE ARE WATCHING...

### **Stanislaus County Planning Commission Update**

by Katherine Borges, Stanislaus County Planning Commission Chairman

Stanislaus County Planning Commission recently welcomed three new commissioners: Wayne Zipser, Thomas Maring and Wayne Mott. Two of the three commissioners have backgrounds in agriculture.

Overall, the year has been fairly slow for the Planning Commission. Of the sixteen scheduled meetings to date, six have been canceled due to lack of projects. The vast majority of projects that go before the commission are agriculture-related; mostly expansions to existing businesses. Some of the other various items that Planning Commission has seen in 2018 are: a dog kennel, a small operations and maintenance facility for West Stanislaus Irrigation District, a liquid carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) purification and liquefaction plant, almond and walnut storage facilities, and a walnut huller.

Rarely are there housing items on the agenda other than parcel rezones. Two housing developments; one in Keyes and a small one in Knight's Ferry that were postponed by the economic recession have recently resurfaced. The small amount of housing supplied by these developments will bring little relief to the shortage of affordable housing within Stanislaus County. Those interested in learning more can sign up for the 41st Stanislaus Planning Commissioners Workshop on the topic of "The Changing Landscape of Affordable Housing" on Saturday, September 15, 2018. Fee is \$25 and call (209) 525-6330 to register.

As the year progresses into the third quarter, the Planning Commission has been notified there will soon be cannabis businesses appearing on the agenda. For more information on the Planning Commission or the Stanislaus County Planning Department, visit: <http://www.stancounty.com/Planning/>

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#### **Central Valley**

[www.cafarmtrust.org](http://www.cafarmtrust.org)

The Central Valley Farmland Trust (CVFT) has reorganized and is now California Farmland Trust. CVFT merged with the Brentwood Farmland Trust of Contra Costa County. The new trust is currently serving the needs of farmers in Sacramento, San Joaquin, Contra Costa, Stanislaus, Merced, and Madera counties. The Trust holds Agricultural Conservation Easements and monitors over 15,313 acres to insure that the land is used for farming in perpetuity.

#### **City of Modesto**

<https://www.modestogov.com/>

Not much activity going on in the City regarding buildings but a number of projects are advancing for road and transportation improvements due to the funding from voter supported Measure L. Here is a link to those projects:

[https://www.modestogov.com/DocumentCenter/View/11885/Measure-L-Quarterly-Report-FY17\\_18](https://www.modestogov.com/DocumentCenter/View/11885/Measure-L-Quarterly-Report-FY17_18)

#### **City of Riverbank**

[www.riverbank.org/](http://www.riverbank.org/)

The Crossroads West Specific Plan is the title of an urban project that expands the City by 390 acres, mostly over prime farmland. It includes 1872 low density, 192 medium density, and 388 high density residential units. The project includes 42 acres of park, open space, and Regional Sports Park uses. This urbanization, over prime farmland, is one of the results of approval by Stanislaus LAFCO of the City of Riverbanks' request to greatly expand their urban footprint, east and west. Soils to the south-east of Riverbank are poorer soils. The project request includes 1 to 1 farmland mitigation for conversion of farmland to residential uses. It does not include mitigation for commercial or industrial uses. The California Farmland Trust has been notified of the project.



## Message from the Chair

**Lori Wolf**

*So, you are at work and the company announces it has a speaker coming in to pitch an idea the next day. Be in the room at 9 am and be prepared. You show up, there are about 100 people there and they introduce the speaker. The pitch begins and you start to absorb the words. As you listen you start to think that maybe they picked the wrong person for this project. The presenter waxes poetic about the benefits of the project, the goals, the details, etc. You start to realize that the benefits, goals, etc. don't seem to make sense with your vision of this type of project.*

*So you look around the room, waiting to see the reactions of your fellow co-workers. A couple are nodding their heads but the majority are sitting in stunned silence, just like you! Your livelihood depends on the success of this project but things aren't making sense. The math isn't there, the goals are misplaced, you actually fear for your livelihood. Then they hand out a boat load of paperwork, pages and pages and pages. You realize you are going to be up all night in order to be prepared for the next few days as this project gets vetted. You leave the meeting hours later, drained, and wondering how in the world you and your co-workers are going to sort out this mess.*

This is the parallel that I offer in terms of

the projected directions for water use to be voted on only by the California State Water Resources Control Board. The Chairwoman, Ms. Marcus, and members of the board are presenting an unworkable, gut wrenching, catastrophic change in how water is allocated and managed in the Central Valley. The plan presented will forever alter the fabric of farming, sending water to the ocean on behalf of a fish species that exists on the southern fringes of its native habitat and presents a clear and present danger to the economy and livelihood of the Central Valley.

I was privileged to attend the rally at the State Capitol on Monday, August 20th. Many of our official representatives were on hand to deliver speeches and support as we resist the efforts of the Water Grab. I can not stress enough that we as citizens of the Central Valley need to fight to have a voice at the table.

Our voice needs to be louder than the voice of the California State Water Resources Control Board. **DROWN OUT THE PLAN. FIGHT THE WATER GRAB.** Demand accountability. And finally, be prepared to defend Farmland in the same manner. My generation needs to shoulder the burden now so that future generations can be prepared for a balanced future. We will need water and food for our sustenance, from our own lands, not something that is outsourced from other countries.

### **FWG Executive Board**

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*Lori Wolf*

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# Vote Smart Nov. 6

### **Local, non-partisan elections – Voting for the Candidate, not the Political Party**

“Local elections” are classified as non-partisan. Non-partisan elections eliminate the preferential position given to political parties. Voting for a candidate’s platform – his/her criteria for operating a municipality – goes beyond the political framework of political parties. The non-partisan election model associated with local elections encourages voters to use criteria other than party affiliation to influence the framework in making decisions. In simple terms, local issues are fundamentally different than national issues.

When voting in local elections, ask questions that help you determine how a candidate’s platform will impact the short and long-term stability of the City. Money often flows into campaign elections along political party lines, reducing the narrative and overlooking the candidate’s proficiency and integrity.

Vote smart. Hopefully, your first question to a candidate for City Council or Mayor isn’t, “What’s your party affiliation?” Nothing will directly impact your quality of life more than local elected officials.



# Farmland Working Group

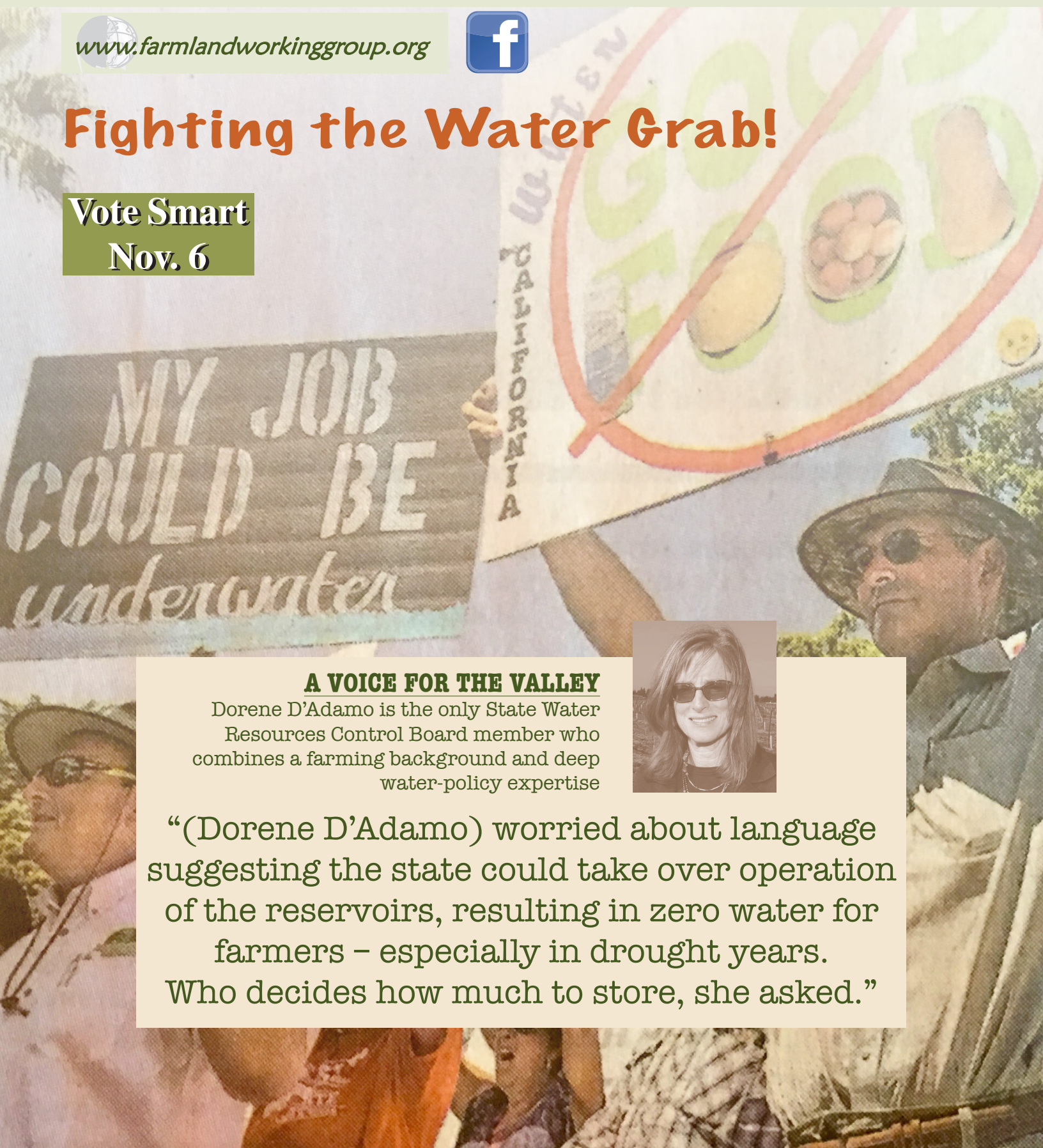
P. O. Box 948 Turlock, CA 95381 (209) 343-4174

[www.farmlandworkinggroup.org](http://www.farmlandworkinggroup.org)



## Fighting the Water Grab!

**Vote Smart**  
**Nov. 6**



### **A VOICE FOR THE VALLEY**

Dorene D'Adamo is the only State Water Resources Control Board member who combines a farming background and deep water-policy expertise



“(Dorene D’Adamo) worried about language suggesting the state could take over operation of the reservoirs, resulting in zero water for farmers – especially in drought years. Who decides how much to store, she asked.”