



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry, California

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July 16, 2013

Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Via electronic mail to: commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov

Re: Comment Letter – July 23rd Workshop on Central Coast Agricultural Order. Files A-2209(a)-(e)

Dear Members of the State Water Resources Control Board,

We write to encourage the State Water Resources Control Board to do all in its power to monitor and actively protect our groundwater from the continued contamination caused by nitrates used in irrigated agriculture.

The UU Legislative Ministry California engages Unitarian Universalists in California in collaborative ministries on behalf of our values – enhancing human dignity, promoting community equity, and respecting the interdependent web of life. With these values as our guide, the 6000 member UU Legislative Ministry California has been active in efforts to realize the human right to water in our state. We celebrated the signing into law of AB685 and now turn our attention to its implementation.

For far too long, thousands of residents in disadvantaged rural communities have suffered from the impact of excessive nitrates in their drinking water. Human dignity, personal health, sustainable finances and community vitality are all put at risk when wells are contaminated and toxic water comes out of the tap.

While agriculture is a valuable part of California's economy, culture and heritage, we must do everything we can to stop the degradation of community water resources that are essential to sustaining life for generations to come. To refrain from doing so is to commit both an environmental and an intergenerational injustice.

AB685 requires that state agencies “consider” the human right to water “when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations, and grant criteria”, giving preference to those

policies that advance the human right to water and refraining from adopting policies that impede progress toward that goal.

As California faces the uncertain hydrology of climate change, ground water will be an increasingly important resource. Decision makers, agriculture, residents and consumers need access to sufficient information. We are all in this together.

In order to guide policy and improve practices it is important to fully identify and document the scope of nitrate pollution both at the tap and in the field. Households whose drinking water is threatened need timely information in order to protect family health. Communities, farmers and regulators need both specific data and knowledge of trends in order to address the problem and formulate solutions.

We are pleased that the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board has taken significant steps toward addressing the problems faced by low-income rural communities suffering from toxic tap water. We ask that the State Board support timely implementation of enforceable regulations, that California's lowest income rural communities may begin to realize the human right to safe, affordable water.

Sincerely,

Rev. Lindi Ramsden
Senior Minister & Executive Director
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry, CA

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