

Imperial Irrigation District – San Diego County Water Authority
Petition to Approve Water Transfer Before State Water Resources Control Board
Sacramento, California

Written Testimony

of

James D. Walker
P.O. Box 39
Westmorland

April 23, 2002

I have farmed in the Imperial Valley for more than forty years. At present, my son and I are farming approximately 1270 acres planted to various crops.

I have been a member of the Imperial Irrigation District's Water Conservation Advisory Board for approximately ten years and have served as president of the organization since June of 1999.

I am concerned that the conservation plan that has been proposed by the IID will do considerable harm to the water rights of certain owners of farmland in the Imperial Valley.

My family has an interest in a parcel located at West Side Main Canal, Gate 69 that would be harmed by this proposal. It consisted of 104 farmable acres during the period 1987 - 1995 and has a water history during that same period of .9 acre-foot per acre.

The owner at that time farmed the ground for a few years after purchasing it from my family in 1987. He then became seriously ill and was no longer able to farm the ground. From time to time tenants were found to farm the land but there were years when it wasn't farmed. The current owners have farmed it intensively since acquiring it in the year 2000.

If the current owners have only .9 Acre Foot to farm with, I suspect the property would be returned to my family, who are the Trust Deed holders, through default. Since it is my understanding that the average agricultural water use in the IID is approximately 5.6 Acre feet per acre, my family would not be able to farm it either. Nor would they be able to sell it as farmland with only .9 AF/Ac available for growing crops. Consequently, allocating irrigation water by history would have a significant negative impact on the value of this property.

On some of my own fields I would have an allocation of water that would be too low to grow some of the crops that I have normally grown over the years based on the IID's average water use for these crops. There are fields that I own or have an interest in that have an average water use in '87-'95 of between 4 and 5 AF/Ac. This amount would not allow me or anyone else to grow alfalfa, bermuda grass or onions in these fields. I would not be able to

follow vegetable crops with wheat or sudan grass in the same year, as has been my practice in certain fields.

Also, as water from the Colorado River brought salt into our fields over the years, we have countered this by installing underground drainage systems to help flush the salt out and keep the ground farmable. This process of installing drainage tile was started in the 1950's and continued into the 1990's.

If we are restricted to a water allocation based on history of use between 1987 and 1995, I am afraid that we won't have enough water to continue to flush the salt from our fields. A higher level of salinity in the soil is detrimental to the growing of most crops, especially vegetables.

My water history for the years 1987 - 1995 shows a conservative use of water for several reasons. First of all, my father and his family were early pioneers in the Imperial Valley and instilled in me the idea that water should not be wasted. Also, due to decision 1600 in 1984, the IID was stressing the efficient use of irrigation water. I took this seriously and tried various methods of using water more efficiently. Some were worth pursuing and some weren't but were tried nevertheless.

In closing, I would like to mention that some of my neighbors didn't appear to be quite so careful in their water use. I would hate to see these people being rewarded for their carelessness while I'm being penalized for my efforts.