

I am George Ray, I reside at 605 E. Beal Road, Niland, CA. I am a farmer.

The proposed water transfer before you today is not - I repeat, is not - strictly speaking, a voluntary agreement negotiated by a willing seller and willing buyer. It is the consequence of many powerful outside forces staking claim to IID's Colorado River water rights. Imperial Valley residents do not have the votes or the financial resources to match these outside forces. Many farmers feel the proposed water transfer is at best the lesser of many evils.

The State Water Resources Control Board is only one of the players in this high stakes -- very serious -- game. The board's Decision 1600 in 1984 & Order 88-20 in 1988 regarding "reasonable & beneficial use" played a very important roll, setting in motion the sequence of events that brings us here today.

Three major events have occurred since the board's fateful decision in 1984.

- Under duress, IID negotiated in good faith to conserve water and transfer conserved water to MWD and the SWRCB approved that transfer.

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- Under duress, IID negotiated an agreement with SDCWA in good faith to conserve water and to transfer water to SDCWA and IID is bringing this water transfer proposal to you.
- Under duress, IID negotiated a Quantification Settlement Agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation, CVWD, Metropolitan Water District, and others. That remains a work in progress.

I and many other farmers believe the Imperial Irrigation Board of Directors relied too heavily during the negotiation process on paid professionals who possessed little understanding of the needs of farmers or the desires of farmers. I and many farmers believe the Imperial Irrigation Board of Directors and the paid professional failed to adequately involve enough farmers and failed to involve farmers early enough in the decision making process. This omission resulted in the flawed proposal before you today.

For the most part, farmers were excluded from the negotiating process and decision making process, yet it is farmers who stand to lose the use of this water, it is farmers who must bear most of the negotiating cost related to the water transfer and the cost of conserving water. It is farmers who are at risk

to the demands of environmental interest and land owners around the Salton Sea.

Working within the constraints of the proposed transfer plan, representatives of the Imperial County Farm Bureau and Imperial Valley Vegetable Growers Association others have put together a water conservation plan that appears to have considerable support among farmers in IID's service area. The proposal will, however require modifications in the proposed water transfer agreement. To date, the IID Board of Directors have not publicly adopted a position on this proposal.

The water transfer agreement with MWD involving about 100,000 acre feet of water is already in place and operational. The proposed water transfer with SDCWA, because of the Quantification Settlement Agreement may involve up to 300,000 acre feet of transferred water.

One of the consequences of these transfers is the accelerated demise of the Salton Sea Fishery. This fishery is an exotic fishery based on tilapia, a fish from Africa, and fish and other organisms from the Sea of Cortez. By most

environmental standards this exotic fishery should not be preserved, yet it has many supporters who claim to be environmentalists.

I am concerned that after having signed these agreements and having transferred up to approximately 400,000 acre feet of water forced in part by SWRCB's "reasonable and beneficial use" principal, the SWRCB will, at some future date, reverse itself and decide that irrigation tail water and canal spills are, after all, reasonable and beneficial because they benefit the Salton Sea ecosystem. Even if the SWRCB does not give its blessing to such action, we farmers are at risk because other more powerful forces such as environmental groups, federal agencies, or the courts may do so. At that point Imperial Valley farmers will be unable to recover the use of water lost through these water transfers. Imperial Valley farmers will be forced to give up additional water and farmers and the community will suffer additional economic harm. Imperial Valley farmers should not be expected to both transfer water to coastal cities and additionally dedicate valuable water to the Salton Sea. Please clarify your board's position on this matter.

The environmental mitigation proposals relating to the Salton Sea are seriously flawed, open-ended, and too costly. Unless mitigation demands

are scaled down or someone else picks up the cost, the transfer should not occur.

I am resigned to the fact that an additional water transfer between one or more coastal communities will occur. But the proposed transfer agreement between IID and SDCWA must be modified if it moves forward. IID's proposed water conservation plan to facilitate the transfer is unacceptable. If the head gate allocation plan goes forward, it will be challenged in the courts and the transfer delayed. IID's conservation plan must be modified along the lines proposed by farmers. If a water transfer is to occur, it is farmers who will have to give up the water.