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Santa Cruz Sentinel

Solving PV Water Problems Will Require Sacrifice—and Unity

Editor's Note: The following opinion was submitted by a group of Pajaro Valley landowners. Their names appear at the end.

“The Pajaro Valley is an unusually valuable agricultural resource. Despite being the most northerly coastal valley in California, it is in many ways more mild than those to the south. While the primary crops have changed through the years and will likely continue to change, there is no doubt that as long as there is land and water available, the Pajaro Valley’s extraordinary climate will be sought after for the production of important and highly valued crops. It is our desire to see the Pajaro Valley continue as a vibrant and valuable agricultural resource.

“The current method of water use is likely to radically diminish the valley’s future agricultural potential. We are extracting water well in excess of the replenishment capacity that currently exists. It is our desire to reach equilibrium of use and replenishment over the next decade. As the dream of large scale water importation has faded, we must now find ways to live within our means. Undoubtedly we will have to capture more of our rainfall for recharge and irrigation. We will have to embrace opportunities to reuse water more effectively and learn to take some advantage of the water flows in the Pajaro River. In addition, we must be prepared to conserve even more in our irrigation practices, create fallow periods for our land and perhaps retire some land from production altogether.

“In any case, achieving the goal of equilibrium will disrupt current practices of land and water use. While this disruption is likely to cause significant pain as we adjust to new systems, it is far better than the likely destruction of much of the valley as an agricultural resource that we are now facing.

“Landowners, farmers and citizens of this valley will all need to make changes in order to secure the long-term agricultural viability of this precious resource. There are a number of reasons to act now:

- The slow, steady decline in water quality and quantity is continuing
- Farming practices are intensifying and could exaggerate the water issues unless they are addressed soon
- Ultimately, agricultural land values in the valley are likely to be impacted because of water concerns
- If adjudication were to occur, it would take a long time, involve massive legal expenses and would be unlikely to produce a result as appropriate as one designed by local people.

“As landowners and land users benefiting greatly from the uniqueness of this beautiful Valley, we recognize that we are contributors to the issue and must be ready to make very significant changes to “business as usual.” We are prepared to step forward and make those changes in partnership with our colleagues across the valley. It is time for us to guide our future and not just let it happen.

“The issues surrounding water in the Pajaro Valley have been extraordinarily divisive over the past several decades. Our sense is that there is significant unity regarding what we are trying to accomplish, but intense disagreement over how to do so. We believe we must simplify the issues first in order to make progress and are seeking concerned stakeholders who share the following:

- A commitment to protect the Pajaro Valley as an important agriculture resource
- A recognition that the solution will not be an importation pipeline
- A willingness to pursue diverse strategies which entail costs and sacrifices in order to bring our aquifer into balance

“The human race faces incredibly difficult global issues of resource exploitation and environmental degradation. With so many differences in cultures, wealth and resource use across vast distances, we will be severely challenged to make progress on a global basis. On the other hand, one can cross our little valley on a bicycle in an hour. With only one or two intermediaries we all know each other. All our fates are closely linked in real and tangible ways. We are in a position to create long term solutions for our water issues with the resources we have at hand. We ask our fellow citizens to commit to preserving this precious resource and to set an example that not only will benefit the people of this valley and our two counties, but provide leadership in solving some of the broader issues we all face.

“If you are interested in joining our commitment and the pursuit of solutions that we can own for ourselves, please email your comments to pwatercommitment@yahoo.com.”

Borina Foundation
Frank W. Capurro
Diane and Don Cooley
David Davini of Watsonville Exchange
Tom Farmer of West Coast Pre-Cooling
Marilee Irwin of Resetar Bros.
Garland Reiter
J. Miles Reiter
Lauren Vucinich of Resetar Farms