

November 30, 2021

Dear Governor Newsom,

California is mired in a climate change fueled drought, leading to water shortages which pose a direct threat to the natural environment and California residents. The water shortages are being driven by large corporate interests who profit while poisoning our environment. We urge you to use your executive authority to take bold action to rein in these interests and balance water use and access in the state.

For much of the past 20 years California has been in a drought, and with fossil fuel driven climate change accelerating, droughts are going to get longer and temperatures will continue to get hotter. This is the new normal. Unfortunately, California manages its water as if we were anything but an arid state. At the same time, some of the industries most responsible for driving climate change continue to use vast quantities of water and pollute fresh water that could be used for people's basic needs or could remain in the environment. A few examples:

Almonds: Agriculture uses 80% of the state's water, but not all crops are equal. A tremendous amount of California water is used to grow water-intensive crops like almonds despite the arid climate that defines much of our state. While almonds may be appropriate in some regions where families have been growing them for generations, they are wholly inappropriate in the salty and selenium-rich soils of the south west San Joaquin Valley. Yet mega growers like the Wonderful Company produce massive quantities of almonds, mostly for exports. Westlands Water District, home to rampant almond production, has pumped more than 1 million acre-feet (or 326 billion gallons) of groundwater in just the past five years - enough to provide everyone in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose and San Francisco with the recommended amount of daily water (55 gallons/day) for more than two years.

Factory farms: Factory farms help drive climate change, produce tremendous amounts of pollution, and are also very water intensive. Food & Water Watch estimates that it takes 142 million gallons of water a day to maintain the dairy cows on California's mega-dairies (those with 500 cows or more), more than enough daily water for every resident of San Jose and San Diego combined. And this does not include the large quantities of water needed to move manure into storage systems or raise the feed for dairy cows (16% of agriculture water is used to grow alfalfa, another thirsty crop).

Oil and gas: An analysis by Food & Water Watch found that between 2018 and March 2021, the oil and gas industry used over 3 billion gallons of freshwater for drilling operations that could otherwise have supplied domestic systems. For perspective, this is enough water to provide everyone in the city of Pasadena with the recommended amount of daily water for an entire year, or everyone in the city of Ventura for 16 months. At the same time, oil and gas corporations' practice of injecting toxic wastewater produced during drilling, into aquifers threatens our groundwater resources.

Bottled Water: There are 97 water bottling plants in California and the most egregious is

Blue Triton (formerly Nestle Waters) which has been illegally bottling water at twenty five times the approved rate in San Bernardino National Forest. In 2020, Blue Triton withdrew 59 million gallons – and according to the State Water Resource Control Board, they should only be withdrawing 2.4 million gallons per year. While the SWRCB sent a cease-and-desist letter to Blue Triton in April to stop withdrawing water from the San Bernardino National Forest, Blue Triton is appealing this order and it appears they are still continuing their illegal water withdrawals.

The consequences of the misallocation of water resources to these industries is devastating. The diversion of water means that there is not enough water to fulfill the human right to water or for the environment, threatening the survival of key species in the Delta like salmon and smelt and historic tribal practices. The overuse and pollution of groundwater means that communities in the Central Valley — already overburdened by pollution — do not have sufficient clean drinking water. Dirty industries like factory farms and the oil and gas extraction threaten existing groundwater supplies even as these industries are fueling the climate crisis which lengthens and worsens droughts. This is a vicious cycle that must be stopped.

In 2012, Governor Brown signed legislation establishing a human right to water in California and as governor you have broad executive authority to address the drought and climate emergency. We call on you to use your authority in light of the statewide drought emergency to help rebalance California’s water allocation, for the benefit of Californians and the environment. We call on you to do the following:

- * Place an immediate moratorium on new oil and gas operations, new and expanded factory farms, and large slaughterhouses. We should not be expanding these industries, especially during a drought.
- * Declare using groundwater to grow almonds and alfalfa in the southwest San Joaquin Valley waste and not a beneficial use. Move to reduce use of groundwater from these industries and halt all new planting of almonds and alfalfa, while providing assistance to help small growers transition to more sustainable and less thirsty crops.
- * Improve water management regulations and practices to conform with the public trust doctrine and the human right to water putting needs of the people first. California water policy must ensure everyone has access to safe, clean, affordable and accessible water. California water regulations should take into account the reality of our changing climate.
- * Improve the transparency of water rights transactions, including prices, volumes and regulations.
- * Respect the water rights of Indigenous communities, actively consult with Indigenous communities on water rights and best water management practices in the true spirit of AB 52 and prioritize state support to disadvantaged communities experiencing water shortages.
- * Accelerate the implementation of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act groundwater

sustainability plans, while ensuring the groundwater agencies and Groundwater Sustainability Plans reflect the needs of all stakeholders, centering vulnerable communities and small and rural water systems as codified in California law. The human right to water must be discussed in GSPs.

* Declare mandatory conservation measures across the state, limiting water consumption to 55 gallons per person per day to get closer to the milestone set by AB 1668.

* Reject public subsidies for water projects that support privatized ocean desalination projects and the wasteful water practices of Big Ag. Stop the private extraction of water for bottling for profit and reject additional bottling permits.

* Prioritize locating and repairing leaky water pipes as our water infrastructure continues to age. We cannot afford to waste the water we have.

Taking these steps now will help protect the environment and water for all people in our state, and avoid much harsher measures as this drought continues. Now is the time for bold leadership. We urge you to take action swiftly for the benefit of all Californians.

Sincerely,

ActiveSGV
AD53 ADEMS
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
Azul
Ban SUP
Center for Biological Diversity
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice
Climate Hawks Vote
Desal Response Group
East Valley Indivisibles
East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
Environmental and Climate Justice Hub, UC Santa Barbara
Fannie Lou Hamer Institute
Food & Water Watch
Fossil Free California
FracTracker Alliance
Friends of the Earth
Green Faith
Ground Game LA
Heal the Bay
Hunger Action Los Angeles Inc

Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN)

Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Mothers Out Front California
Mothers Out Front Capital Region Team
Mothers Out Front SF
Mothers Out Front Silicon Valley
Movement Rights
NELA Climate Collective
Plant-Based Advocates
Progressive Democrats of America
Rainforest Action Network
SanDiego350
Santa Cruz Climate Action Network
SoCal 350 Climate Action
Somos Familia Valle
Southern California Watershed Alliance
Stand.earth
Stop Fracking Long Beach
SumOfUs
Sunflower Alliance
The environmental justice coalition for water
The River Project
The Story of Stuff Project
Together We Will/Indivisible-Los Gatos
Venice Resistance

Youth Vs Apocalypse