

*3/19/14 Oversight Field Hearing on  
"California Water Crisis and Its Impacts: The  
Need for Immediate and Long-Term Solutions."*

My name is Larry Starrh, I am a partner in Starrh Family Farms. Our farm is located in Kern County and My partners include my father Fred Starrh, my brother Fred Starrh 2, and my brother in-law Jay Kroeker. Our office and all our book keeping is run by my sisters and recently my niece and my oldest son is now farming with us and is excited by the opportunity for a future in farming. My youngest son is also looking forward to being a farmer and has said so since he was a toddler. We employ 46 full time employees with an average time of service of over 20 years. Good men who have dedicated years of their life to help make our farm successful and we are grateful to them. We farm close to 9,000 acres primarily almonds and pistachios. The bulk of our ranch is located in the Belridge Water Storage District and is completely reliant on The State Water Project for providing water.

This meeting is about water. My family has been farming for over 80 years, and according to what I have been told by the experts this is the driest year on record in California!... Due to lack of water this year my family and I had to make the decision to "dry up and let die" close to a thousand acres of producing almond trees, as well as keeping fallow another two thousand acres of open ground. Ground that we have had to keep idle for close to eight years because of water shortages. Shortages that were created and controlled by regulations, regulations that have been imposed and brandished like weapons! On the State Water Project water has been "taken" out of the system to protect environmental needs, to add insult to injury the bill for that water is paid for by the people who the water was taken from. Our farm hasn't received a hundred percent allocation for water in 18 years but we have been charged and have had to pay for 100 percent every year. We pay for water we don't get. Then we have to try and source "dry year water" to buy which can cost double or triple, or like this year ten times more than the base price. We can't sustain this way of doing business, the water system in California is crippled and needs to be repaired.

In my world water is life. Water creates life, water sustains life.

Sadly in the real world water is about power, water is a weapon, water is a hostage. Our water system is battered and broken and has been kidnapped/hijacked by the unreasonable, and we need help! This year we are in a drought caused by nature, I know that, but in the years prior to this the droughts we have suffered were imposed on us by the illogical and senseless. Thank you! Thank you for your commitment and your understanding that water is life! And thank you for trying to find a reasonable solution!