

TESTIMONY OF CARL JANZEN

Farmer

Madera, California

Board Member

Madera Irrigation District



**BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
WATER AND POWER SUBCOMMITTEE**

September 27, 2005

Mr. Chairman and members of the Water and Power Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to provide testimony on the Madera Irrigation District's Water Supply Enhancement Project in Madera, California. As one of his constituents, I want to especially thank Chairman Radanovich for holding today's hearing and introducing the Madera Water Supply and Enhancement Project Act authorizing federal support for this important Project. We are very appreciative of Chairman Radanovich's efforts on behalf of the Project and wholeheartedly support his legislation. The Chairman understands the needs of our communities and the state of California, and we are fortunate to have him representing our interests here in Washington.

My name is Carl Janzen. I am a third generation farmer and a member of the Board of the Madera Irrigation District, which I will refer to in my testimony as "MID". With me is Charles Stringer. Mr. Stringer consults MID and is here to assist me in answering any questions you may have about MID's Project.

MID was established in 1920 to supply surface water to farmers in its service area. Madera farmers are some of the most productive in California's Central Valley and the United States. In 2004 alone, we produced over one billion dollars in almonds, grapes, milk and other agricultural products for consumers in the United States and around the globe. With about 125,000 residents, Madera ranks 35th in the state by population. But our agricultural economy is the 14th most productive in California, ranks 23rd in the nation, and supplies one-third of the total jobs in Madera County.

Unlike many other agricultural areas in California, most of Madera's farms are still owned and

operated by families like my own. As the Chairman knows, Madera's agricultural economy is the backbone of our region and we're very proud of it.

Water, of course, is the fuel that runs our region's economic engine. To obtain the water we need, farmers within MID use a combination of groundwater pumped from beneath our land and surface water delivered to us by MID. The need to pump groundwater varies in response to weather conditions and the availability of surface water, with an increase in pumping required in dry years when there is a limited supply of surface water.

Over the years, the amount of groundwater pumped has exceeded the amount of water recharging the aquifer, resulting in what scientists call groundwater overdraft. Even in wet years, the groundwater is in overdraft because of pumping in dry years and increased pumping for municipal and industrial purposes. This overdraft has caused the water table to decline and groundwater quality to degrade. In addition, because we have to reach further underground for our water, it is becoming more and more expensive to pump to the surface.

MID's efforts to reduce the need for groundwater by establishing a supply of surface water began in the 1930s, when our forefathers already knew that we needed a stable and reliable source of surface water. Their foresight led to the sale of MID's property on the San Joaquin river to the Bureau of Reclamation for the construction of the Friant Dam. Like other dams, the Friant was designed for flood control and, most importantly, to store water for agricultural use. The storage provided by the dam is one of the cornerstones of our water supply system and is

essential to the vitality of our economy.

But while storage in the Friant has reduced our reliance on groundwater pumping, Madera's aquifer is still in overdraft at the rate of 100,000 acre feet a year. In 1912, when my Grandfather dug the first well on our farm, he had to drill just twenty feet before finding water to sustain our family business. Recently, my son and I had to drill 165 feet in the same place. And my family is one of the lucky ones. Some farmers are drilling seven- or eight-hundred feet down to get water, if they can find any at all. As you can see, the Madera region needs additional storage.

The need for additional storage to reduce the rate of groundwater overdraft and stabilize supply is why MID is pursuing the Water Supply Enhancement Project. Like the Friant Dam, MID's project is key to our water security and the continued health of our region's economy and communities. But unlike the Friant Dam, our Project provides storage of water underground. It is what we in the west call a "water bank": an underground storage facility designed to store our water for use during dry years.

MID has been working for years to realize its vision of an underground storage facility to serve the needs of the community. We have watched others attempt to build water banks in Madera and fail because they were motivated more by the goals of out-of-state business interests than by local needs and priorities. We have conducted numerous scientific studies and talked to our farmers and other members of our community so we understand exactly how to develop and operate the Project to meet our needs. And we have recently issued bonds in the amount of \$37.5 million to purchase over 13,648 acres known as the "Madera Ranch", land ideally suited

for the Water Supply Enhancement Project.

Located in Southwestern Madera County, the Madera Ranch has historically been used for row crops, orchards, vineyards, and livestock grazing. Owned for generations by the Pope family, most of the Madera Ranch has never been farmed. The land contains valuable habitat and some of the Central Valley's last remaining large sections of native grasslands. Most importantly for the purposes of the water storage facility, the soils on and underneath the land are ideal for percolating water from the surface down to the aquifer for storage. In fact, large pools of water literally disappear overnight, quickly percolating down to the overdrafted aquifer below.

As designed by MID, the facility has the ability to store 250,000 acre feet of water, about half of what the Friant Dam can store. The Project could move 55,000 acre feet into or out of storage each year, enough to provide the 147,000 acres in MID with reliable sources during dry years. A key element of our Project is to always leave behind ten percent of the water placed in storage, thus reducing the rate of groundwater overdraft.

While this would be the first underground water storage facility in Madera, there are many examples of successful water banks in California. The Project is based on proven methods and the latest in sustainable water management practices. We have learned from the experiences of the pioneers in this area and are committed to serving our community with one of California's best examples of underground storage facilities.

Now that MID owns the Madera Ranch, the next step is to finance and build the water bank.

This phase of the Project requires the improvement of existing water conveyance systems, the construction of new areas on the Ranch to recharge the water, and the placement of new wells to pump water out of storage when needed. MID estimates that the construction of the water bank will cost between \$38 and 42 million. We plan to finance this next phase through a combination of funds, including the critical support offered by the legislation proposed by Chairman Randanovich.

MID is also exploring ways to set aside and protect the Madera Ranch's native grasslands and habitat, which comprise the largest contiguous tract of upland habitat in the Central Valley. Of the 13,648 acres, the Water Supply Enhancement Project will need about 10% of the land for percolation of water into groundwater storage. Whether MID can achieve its goal to protect the remaining almost 10,000 acres of native, undeveloped land will depend, in part, upon the extent of public assistance we receive from the Project.

One of the key components of the Project's administration is the Oversight Monitoring Committee, which MID established in February of this year. Members of the Committee include community leaders such as Tim DeSiliva, Denis Prosperi, Rick Cosyns, and Kole Upton. We believe that the Committee is vital to ensuring that the Project is responsive to the concerns of local landowners and the community. Among many other responsibilities, the Committee is charged with protecting neighboring landowners from potential impacts from the Project.

Support for the Water Supply Enhancement Project has been overwhelming. Since early January 2005, MID has held over 25 public meetings in Madera County alone. MID has now received

dozens of letters of enthusiastic support from local, state and federal elected officials, organizations, agencies, and individuals. Copies of those letters are included in a notebook of information on the Project MID has provided to Subcommittee staff. In addition, we are just completing our state environmental review process. We received constructive comments from public agencies that MID has addressed to improve the project.

As some of the Subcommittee members may know, the Senate has provided \$200,000 for the Project in 2006 in the Energy and Water Appropriations bill. MID is grateful for this assistance and looks forward to working with members of this Subcommittee and other members of Congress to ensure that this funding is included in the final appropriations conference report.

Thank you again for the invitation to speak with you today about the Madera Water Supply Enhancement Project. Enactment of the The Madera Water Supply and Enhancement Project Act legislation is essential to timely completion of the Project and will help to ensure the continued flow of Madera's agricultural products across the nation and around the world. We urge the Subcommittee to give the Chairman's legislation prompt and favorable consideration.

I request that my testimony today as well as the notebooks be made a part of the record. I also request that MID be granted the opportunity to supplement the record with additional documents and information as they become available. Mr. Stringer and I are happy to answer any questions you may have.