

From: Tony De groot
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To: House of Representatives, Representative Vakadao and Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries

My name is Tony DeGroot, a local dairy farmer in Kings County. I am a second generation farmer with my son Jared being the third and his sons to be the fourth. I have been asked to give a short story of events in our area along with possible struggles which may hinder my sleeping at night.

I will start by thanking our God for sending us the water we have been praying for. I believe God has given us an open door and an opportunity to act on the abundance of rain and snow he has given for the 4th time in my lifetime. We are blessed with winter storms every year but I have only seen flooding of this magnitude in 1968, 79, 83 and now again here in 2023. Unfortunately, this year's rain and snow pack will be another wasted blessing if we watch it go by.

In preparation for this speech I was asked to bring out a few challenges I face in my business.

1) White area farmers, (those with only one water source), need a seat on their local board, at this point we can only make our voice heard after the closed sessions have already made their decisions.

2) More infrastructure by the way of canals, pipelines and pumps, this would also make the use of new and expanded dams more valuable, allowing white area farmers to now have access to surface water.

3) Another much needed asset to California would be the success of the Valley Blue Print.

4) Farmers are price takers not price makers yet we are continually bombarded with added fees coming from all sides, we are now expected to solve the water crisis by not

being allowed to pump water while expected to feed the world, I believe this cost should be shared by all tax payers, not only the farmer.

I would also like to share my account of flooding and success from my area. Our family dairy farms in Hanford Ca. where Crosscreek and Highline canals cross.

I received a call from my neighbor who was asking for my input as he'd never witnessed or been through one of these devastating floods in our area. After a quick assessment it was clear that this was the biggest flooding I have ever witnessed. At that time water was flowing through the RR tracks, over Grangeville blvd in a new location, through fields and heading in his direction.

If desperate measures had not been taken, portions of two dairies, including feed yards and houses would have flooded.

Temporary dams were built on Grangeville Blvd, tractor pumps were pumping water to higher ground, levees were constructed to hold water back from cow and feed areas.

Due to abnormally high water flows in Cross Creek the Highline Canal was breached in several spots allowing an unprecedented amount of water to flow toward the city of Corcoran.

Over the next couple days, a bypass channel was constructed on the property of Jack De Jong south of highway 198 from Highline canal back to Crosscreek where it originated from upstream. The Highline canal now has a newly constructed dam with a head gate to allow a percentage of water to pass for downstream users and percolation. I share this story because when I got the initial call I immediately called the Kings County Board of Supervisors for their help. Within three days they had three emergency meetings. What would have normally taken 30 years just to "approve," now got accomplished in 30 hours. This was all made possible with communication and common sense of local farmers and authorities working together. "It can happen!"

My family is blessed that our facilities are on just high enough ground that our structures should stay dry, however we do have approximately 600 acres of great farmland under water. This is significant due to the implementation of SGMA and new water allocations and cost of water, on top of our pumping cost. We have cut our wheat planting acreage down 50% compared to previous years. And now of that remaining acreage 50% of this year's wheat is under water. Another unknown factor is how long the flooded acres will remain flooded and how we will now feed our cattle for the remainder of the year. For us, and many like us there will be a feed shortage with wheat and alfalfa drowning throughout the Central Valley. With 600 flooded acres this means that about 50% of our corn ground may remain underwater for this season as well.

As a child I went with my father to meetings as he advocated for the Mid Valley Canal. It failed because people had no vision of what things would look like with no water. "Well 50 years later can we see it now." I can. I can envision what California will look like with more dams, more canals, new methods of irrigation. Preserved wildlife habitat while continuing the family farm for generations to come.

Congressman Valadao, thank you so much for not only hearing our concerns but for acting on our behalf. I was taught many years ago that if you take care of the ground it will take care of you. Our goals are to leave this world better than we received it. And if we all work together, I believe this goal is achievable for our generation, and generations to come.

Thank you for your time.