

Honored Board Members,

New ecological and water challenges are on the horizon, with global warming, and long-term water-expectations of established cattle and other crop industries. Perhaps it's time to re-evaluate established water rights for all farmers, ranchers, homeowners and business operators. What's good for one industry, is good for all, is it not?

We all here today value and wish to preserve the existence of and habitat for fish, animal and native species (while deterring invasives), but let's not single out one crop over another when it comes to water. Instead, let's look at the drought difficulty holistically with changes within each and every industry, business and home to lighten the water load on all of our cumulative aquifers and water sources.

Perhaps it's time to subsidize the creation of more rain catchment ponds and tanks for the use of wildlife and even fire protection while providing current and future ranchers, farmers and business owners with a new, free source of water that does not directly impact the local aquifers and rivers. Perhaps CDFW could work with the Regional Water Board and Mendocino County to find grants to fund such rain catchment improvements in our economically disadvantaged areas.

Perhaps it's time to re-evaluate the water contracts sold decades ago to parts south, that drain our rivers and water sources of millions (billions?) of gallons for far-off city and suburban uses. Can those be reversed? Reduced? Renegotiated?

We support CDFW's suggested use of established CEQA protocols with their protections and mitigations in place, for Phase 3 through a discretionary process for all Phase 1 applicants without reservation, and new incoming applicants in all zoning areas, but as CDFW also recommends, not at 10%.

CDFW's suggestion of establishing a Phase 4 for further expansion at some point in the future when our community-wide water and land information is more soundly based and settled, is an interesting suggestion the Board might very seriously consider.

Regards,

H. Wordhouse
Jackrabbit Ranch