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# California State Senate

SENATOR  
**ANDREAS BORGEAS**  
EIGHTH SENATE DISTRICT



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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PANDEMIC  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE

April 12, 2021

Governor Gavin Newsom  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Request for Statewide Emergency Declaration on California's Drought**

Dear Governor Newsom;

On April 7<sup>th</sup> a bipartisan, and bicameral, group of San Joaquin Valley legislators wrote to you<sup>1</sup> requesting an emergency declaration on California's drought. When asked during the press conference about the emergency declaration in Shaver Lake on April 8<sup>th</sup>, you indicated that your administration was not prepared to do so at this time. While I appreciate your visit to the 8<sup>th</sup> Senate District, I respectfully request that you reconsider given the amount of prevailing data indicating California's drought conditions:

- United States Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, in a letter to you on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021, designated "...50 California counties as primary natural disaster areas due to a recent drought"<sup>2</sup> thus opening up opportunities for emergency federal assistance for some farmers.
- The United States Drought Monitor (USDM), which is updated daily, currently characterizes 69.7% of California being in a state of "severe drought."<sup>3</sup>
- In addition, the slim five-percent water allocations announced by the California Department of Resources<sup>4</sup> and zero-percent at the federal level,<sup>5</sup> combined with prolonged dry weather, leaves California in a period of significant drought.
- US Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and Secretary Tom Vilsack released a joint statement on April 8<sup>th</sup> acknowledging drought conditions in the Western United States are continuing to worsen.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Borgeas, Andreas

<https://borgeas.cssrc.us/sites/default/files/Water%20Allocations%20Letter%20to%20Governor%20Newsom.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Vilsack, Thomas J.

<https://www.sjgov.org/uploadedfiles/sjc/departments/agcomm/news/announcements/cadroughtdisaster03052021.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> NIDIS. Current U.S. Drought Monitor Conditions for California. <https://www.drought.gov/states/california>

<sup>4</sup> DWR adjusts State Water project ALLOCATION Following dry winter. <https://water.ca.gov/News/News-Releases/2021/March-21/SWP-Allocation-Update-March-23>

<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Reclamation. Reclamation updates Central Valley Project 2021 water supply allocation.

<https://www.usbr.gov/newsroom/#/news-release/3796?filterBy=region%20ion=California-Great%20Basin>

<sup>6</sup> Department of Interior. 2021, April 8. Joint Statement. <https://www.doi.gov/news/joint-statement-interior-secretary-deb-haaland-and-agriculture-secretary-tom-vilsack-western>

- The state of Utah has already acknowledged and declared a drought emergency.<sup>7</sup>
- In a news release announcing reduced water allocations DWR Director Karla Nemeth said, “We are now facing the reality that it will be a second dry year for California and that is having a significant impact on our water supply.”<sup>8</sup>

California’s agricultural communities are essential to our state’s economy and our national security. As I have stated before, the pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of our food supply chain and highlighted the importance of food and water security. The state cannot afford to wait any longer to declare a state of emergency. California’s food producers must make decisions now on whether to plant or pull crops in order to plan for future harvests.

By providing agencies more flexibility under a state of emergency order, state agencies and stakeholders can work together to adapt to this challenging situation. All tools should be available to minimize red tape for water transfers, and allow state agencies to modify certain reservoir release standards to allow for more water to go to communities throughout the state.

On behalf of California’s agricultural communities already struggling under dry conditions, I sincerely appreciate your consideration of this urgent request.

Sincerely,



ANDREAS BORGEAS  
Chair, Senate Agriculture Committee

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<sup>7</sup> Utah Governor. 2021, March 17. Gov. Issues Drought Executive Order. <https://governor.utah.gov/2021/03/17/gov-cox-issues-drought-executive-order/>

<sup>8</sup> DWR adjusts State Water project ALLOCATION Following dry winter. <https://water.ca.gov/News/News-Releases/2021/March-21/SWP-Allocation-Update-March-23>