

Solving PV water problems will require sacrifice -- and unity

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Editor's note: The following opinion was submitted by a group of Pajaro Valley landowners. Their names appear at the end.

The Pajaro Valley is an unusually valuable agricultural resource. Despite being the most northerly coastal valley in California, it is in many ways more mild than those to the south. While the primary crops have changed through the years and will likely continue to change, there is no doubt that as long as there is land and water available, the Pajaro Valley's extraordinary climate will be sought after for the production of important and highly valued crops. It is our desire to see the Pajaro Valley continue as a vibrant and valuable agricultural resource.

The current method of water use is likely to radically diminish the valley's future agricultural potential. We are extracting water well in excess of the replenishment capacity that currently exists. It is our desire to reach equilibrium of use and replenishment over the next decade.

As the dream of large scale water importation has faded, we must now find ways to live within our means. Undoubtedly we will have to capture more of our rainfall for recharge and irrigation. We will have to embrace opportunities to reuse water more effectively and learn to take some advantage of the water flows in the Pajaro River. In addition, we must be prepared to conserve even more in our irrigation practices, create fallow periods for our land and perhaps retire some land from production altogether.

Achieving the goal of equilibrium will disrupt current practices of land and water use. While this disruption is likely to cause significant pain as we adjust to new systems, it is far better than the likely destruction of much of the valley as an agricultural resource that we are now facing.

Landowners, farmers and citizens of this valley will all need to make changes in order to secure the long-term agricultural viability of this precious resource. There are reasons to act now:

- The slow, steady decline in water quality and quantity
- Farming practices are intensifying and could exaggerate the water issues if not addressed
- Ultimately, agricultural land values in the valley are likely to be impacted because of water concerns
- If adjudication occurs, it will take a long time, involve massive legal expenses and be unlikely to produce a better result than one designed by local people.

As landowners and land users benefiting greatly from the uniqueness of this beautiful Valley, we recognize that we are contributors to the issue. We are prepared to step forward and make significant changes to "business as usual" in partnership with our colleagues across the valley. It is time for us to guide our future and not just let it happen.

The issues surrounding water in the Pajaro Valley have been extraordinarily divisive over the past several decades. There seems to be significant unity regarding what we are trying to accomplish, but intense disagreement over how to do so. We must simplify the issues in order to make progress and are seeking concerned stakeholders who share:

- A commitment to protect the Pajaro Valley as an important agriculture resource
- A recognition that the solution will not be an importation pipeline
- A willingness to pursue diverse strategies, which entail costs and sacrifices, to bring our aquifer into balance.

With only one or two intermediaries we all know each other. All our fates are closely linked in real and tangible ways. We ask our fellow citizens to commit to preserving this precious resource and provide leadership.

If you are interested in joining our commitment and the pursuit of solutions that we can own for ourselves, please e-mail pvwatercommitment@yahoo.com.

Borina Foundation, Frank W. Capurro, Diane and Don Cooley, David Davini of Watsonville Exchange, Tom Farmer of West Coast Pre-Cooling, Marilee Irwin of Resetar Bros., Garland Reiter, J. Miles Reiter, Lauren Vucinich of Resetar Farms.