



COMMUNITY ALLIANCE
WITH FAMILY FARMERS

April 17, 2017

The Honorable Cecilia Aguiar-Curry
Member, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 5144
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1420 (Aguiar-Curry) – Small Irrigation Ponds - SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry:

The Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) is a statewide organization that represents both farmers and non-farm urban residents who support sustainable food and farming policies. CAFF is pleased to support your AB 1420, which will take one more step in streamlining the permitting process for irrigation ponds that hold water from high stream flows for use during periods of low stream flows.

Utilizing ponds in this manner has seemed to us the obvious solution to the problems that have arisen during periods of drought, when stream flows on small creeks are often too low to support the pumping of irrigation or frost protection water by all agricultural operations with water rights. This has led in some cases to the stranding of fish that are endangered species. CAFF championed this solution through our California Agricultural Water Stewardship Initiative (CAWSI) and we created an entire section of the CAWSI web site on ponds.

(see http://agwaterstewards.org/practices/farm_ponds_for_irrigation)

However, the permitting process for such ponds is onerous. An effort of this sort for a group of farmers on Pine Gulch Creek in Marin County took over 10 years to permit. The Legislature attempted to address this predicament in 2011 with AB 964 (Chapter 579, Huffman), which established a small irrigation use registration to facilitate water rights for small off-stream ponds used for frost protection, irrigation and related uses, on a statewide basis. However, the Water Board made this remedy available only on the North Coast.

AB 1420 modifies current law by simplifying a registrant's permitting burden and by expanding the small irrigation use registration program. AB 1420 simplifies a registrant's permitting burden by exempting registrations from the DFW's Lake and Streambed Alteration program if DFW has provided conditions on the approved registration and the registrant provides a specified fee. It also extends the program beyond the North Coast.

CAFF believes that we must work diligently to streamline regulations in order to solve the problems that confront us in the allocation of water in the state. Whether we are putting water

in the ground in order to recharge groundwater or—as in this case—putting it into ponds, utilizing high stream flows in ways that were not contemplated in existing regulations will be essential moving forward. For this reason we are in strong support of AB 1420.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Runsten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Runsten
Policy Director