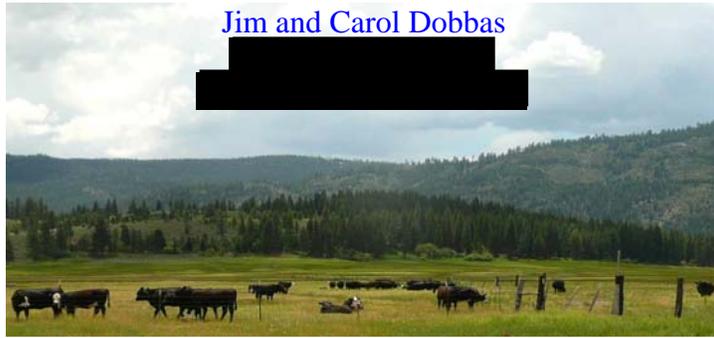


Jim and Carol Dobbas



March 30, 2011

To: Adam Laputz and CVRWQB

Re: Adoption of ILRP Framework:

Submission of individual farm information to public-accessed databases

Dear Governing Board of the Central Valley Water Quality Programs and Staff,

We are a small family ranch that raises beef and dryland grain hay at 5000 feet in Sierra Valley. I also serve as executive director of the Upper Feather River Watershed Group (UFRWG), a local subcoalition organized specifically to address this program. We are more than a little concerned with the "*planned electronic submittals from individual dischargers to the Board*" (pageA-14, #6 of the Framework document).

Public accessed electronic databases containing individual farm information and maps will subject our members to potential security issues and data misuse and abuse. There is no protection against litigious organizations that have a history of abuse of the easy access of reported information as a quick source for frivolous lawsuits against complying entities, even for simple paperwork errors. We acknowledge the Regional Board's need for some level of documentation of water quality practices. Coalition submittals of summary information by waterway and/or commodity will provide adequate information to meet this need, especially in low threat areas.

The members of our active coalition have undertaken special studies at the monitoring sites and even on their private lands (with the agreement that private land information remains with the landowner for his farm planning, as is done with NRCS contracts). Members voluntarily host and attend annual local ranch BMP tours, receive regular educational Newsletters, attend local Ag Workshops, work with NRCS & other funders, or fund themselves, the implementation of best management practices on pasture and forage operations which are the primary agricultural practices in our montaine watershed. Water quality topics and the Irrigated Lands Program are regularly discussed at our local Cattlemen's and Farm Bureau meetings. Our UCCE Farm Advisor is a well respected leader both locally and statewide for providing proactive programs for the local agriculture community. The UFRWG board and membership meets regularly to stay on top of this shifting and expanding program. Required Management Plans under the current ILRP are nearly complete. For these past years we have proven that we are a low threat watershed.

Our reward for this successful track record? ILRP staff now proposes each individual farmer electronically submit their farm information directly to the Regional Board, bypassing the local coalitions which were originally formed to provide farmers and ranchers some incentive in addressing this invasive regulatory program. Adopting this proposal within the Framework will

undermine our years of effort to develop valuable partnerships through outreach and education among our members and local agencies. The short term and long term effect will be to alienate coalition leadership from our membership. This requirement will ratchet up regulatory creep on our low threat complying members. In low threat areas like UFRWG, there is no justification for this level of increased regulatory action.

For six years, the 105 ranchers and farmers in our rural counties have spent nearly \$300,000 on agriculture water monitoring and reporting to comply with the current ILRP. Upper Feather River waterways have met water quality standards, with a few exceptions back in 2006 - 2008 for the low-threat "unknown" parameters of DO, pH and E.coli. Working with our UC Cooperative Extension and UC Davis researchers, who have partnered with us to meet the mandates of this program, UFRWG and its members have been engaged in identifying sources for these background parameters for the ILRP. A Special DO and pH Study identified natural elements as driving these parameters. A Management Plan is underway for the ever-present E.coli with numerous non-agriculture sources. These are costly endeavors to provide research to confirm non-agriculture drivers. The current coalition approach is resulting in on-the-ground efforts to meet water quality standards.

Another point of real concern in the Framework is the premature identification of a specific implementation practice as a mandate of a conditional waiver of WDRs for the yet to be drafted Orders. The example we reference is on page A-9 of the Framework Attachment for irrigated pasture. We are encouraged to see the recognition of low-threat commodities. But we caution that this level of implementation planning must take into account the specifics within each watershed region and its geography. These details will be addressed best as RB staff and third parties begin to work together to draft the Orders. To mandate a specific practice at the Framework stage will unnecessarily constrain local entities in region-specific planning. Additionally, it will again unnecessarily entice litigation from program critics who fund themselves through such frivolous activities.

As part of the UFRWG leadership, and as one of the many committed and active members of UFRWG, we strongly urge the Water Board to allow coalitions to continue to manage their own member data and to provide the Water Board with summary information as needed to meet ILRP goals in agriculture water quality.

Coalition compliance and reporting is working in our low-threat watershed!

Respectfully,

Jim & Carol Dobbas  
Members of Upper Feather River Watershed Group  
Agriculture Stakeholders Advancing Water Stewardship

Cc Katherine Hart, Chairperson  
Pamela Creedon, Executive Officer  
Joe Karkoski, ILRP Supervising WRCE  
Susan Fregien, ILRP Senior ES  
Mark Cady, ILRP ES