

TESTIMONY OF Cannon Michael
TO THE WATER AND POWER SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES

March 1, 2007

Chairwoman Napolitano and honorable members of this Sub-Committee, good morning and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you.

My name is Cannon Michael and I assist my uncle in operating our family farm, Bowles Farming Company, Inc., located near Los Banos, California. A good portion of the land we farm is adjacent to the San Joaquin River along the stretch now known as Reach 4b. Having had an opportunity for input into this legislation, I am here today for two purposes, first to testify in support of the legislation and second, to share with you some concerns should the legislation not be implemented in the way we hope it will.

I am a sixth generation Californian and my family has been involved with agriculture since the mid 1800's. My great-great-great grandfather came to America, like so many immigrants have, in search of the promise of better life and freedom. He arrived in California as a young man with little more than a dream of what could be.

The San Joaquin Valley was no land of dreams for those who settled there in the 1800's. It has taken the united efforts of farmers, communities, state and local agencies and the federal government to make the valley the "breadbasket of the world" that it is

today. The key component in the transformation of the valley has been a reliable supply of water. With the reliable water supply, and the protection from flooding, the San Joaquin Valley has become the most diverse and productive agricultural center in the world.

I come before you today to testify on behalf of the farmers and citizens that will be affected by the proposed restoration of the San Joaquin River. We are not just “Third Parties” to this Settlement; we are families, community leaders, teachers, coaches, providers of food and fiber for our great nation. The restoration of the San Joaquin River has far reaching impacts for all the residents of the San Joaquin Valley. It is imperative that the Third Parties have a voice in this complicated, lengthy and costly process.

For those of us located in Reach 4b, having a voice in the restoration process is of vital importance. The San Joaquin River holds to a defined channel in its upper reaches, but historically it would spread into many “braided” channels as it reached the flat valley floor in our area. The flows called for in the Settlement are exponentially greater than the existing capacity of Reach 4b and could severely impact the families that live and farm along this stretch. The bill you are considering, H.R. 24, calls for the restoration’s impact on Reach 4b to be studied carefully and completely prior to introducing any high level flows.

I understand that restoration of Reach 4B will cost in the range of \$400 million. Cost-benefit is one measure that will have to be considered when studying the feasibility of using this reach of the river. It is important that you understand the challenge of

moving fish through this reach. First of all, a sizeable amount of privately held land will have to be acquired in order to create a stream channel of sufficient width and depth to convey flow of at least 4500 cfs. The valley floor here is very flat and the water table is high, so highly engineered levees will be needed to protect the adjacent lands from surface and sub-surface flooding. The new stream channel will also need to be constructed in a fish friendly manner. Even after that, this stretch of river has little elevation change, the slow moving water will be warm – approaching 80 degrees during the summer, no matter how much is released from Friant Dam. Reach 4b will, at best, be a hostile environment for fish.

The San Joaquin River stretches for miles below the Friant Dam and every reach has its own unique characteristics. The proposed Restoration presents challenges for every mile of the San Joaquin and there are many landowners who will be affected. We all need a reliable water supply and our lands need to be protected from flooding. We are mindful of the experience of water agencies and farmers in our area regarding the federal government's failure to complete the San Luis drain. We do not want to see a repeat of a half-finished project in this restoration program. If our water supplier agencies are adversely affected, we will be too. Therefore, it is essential that adequate funds be appropriated and that the third parties have a place at the table to make sure this program is implemented in a manner that doesn't cause us harm.

In conclusion, this bill was crafted out of a collaborative effort by the parties to the litigation, state and federal agencies and the third party interests. This is the same type of collaborative effort that will be needed if the restoration of the San Joaquin River can ever

truly be a success. Any changes to this bill could potentially subvert the positive results that it represents. I respectfully ask that you do not entertain any changes to this legislation.