



# COUNTY OF SISKIYOU

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## Board of Supervisors

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March 24, 2020

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20050

**Subject: Food Security and National Agriculture Day**

Dear President Trump:

The Siskiyou County, California, Board of Supervisors applauds your Proclamation establishing today as National Agriculture Day. Since the mid-nineteenth century, agriculture has been the backbone of the economy and culture in our county. Your proclamation graciously salutes our farmers, ranchers, agricultural workforce, and rural communities. At this extraordinary time in our nation's history, we are also grateful for the leadership at both federal and state levels as we, local government, work to protect our citizens and maintain the economic viability of our communities.

The Presidential Proclamation's emphasis on food security and the fundamental importance of agriculture is very timely. Unfortunately, agricultural communities, and the country, suffer due to the disconnect between the farms and ranches and the populations and regulators that actually depend on food and fiber. Farmers and ranchers, including those in Siskiyou County, produce the food that is supplied in grocery stores, super markets, restaurants, and direct farm-to-table enterprises and keep people fed worldwide.

Ironically, because Western irrigated agriculture has been so adaptive and successful at providing plentiful, safe and affordable food, no one believes there could be a problem. The last Americans to experience any type of food shortages are members of the Greatest Generation and their parents during the Great Depression. For the most part, they have left us, taking with them the memories of empty grocery store shelves. When the issue has never been personalized, it is easy to be complacent.

Now, the coronavirus crisis underscores the importance of safety and stability provided by domestic food production. The U.S. needs a stable domestic food supply, just as it needs a stable energy supply. Our country's leaders must adopt an overriding national goal of remaining self-sufficient in food production; food security *is* homeland security. Policy decisions on a wide range of issues should be evaluated to be sure they are consistent with that goal.

New demands for water supplies and land are driving Western farmers off the land at a time when we should be doing everything in our power to prevent American food production from following other industries "off-shore" in search of lower costs. Meanwhile, Americans are spending, on average, less than 7 percent of their disposable income on food. To put this in perspective, 80 years ago, that figure

was more than 25 percent. While more, better and safer food is being produced by our American farmers, these same farmers continue to feel the pinch – and it is only a matter of time before that pinch translates itself back to the supermarket.

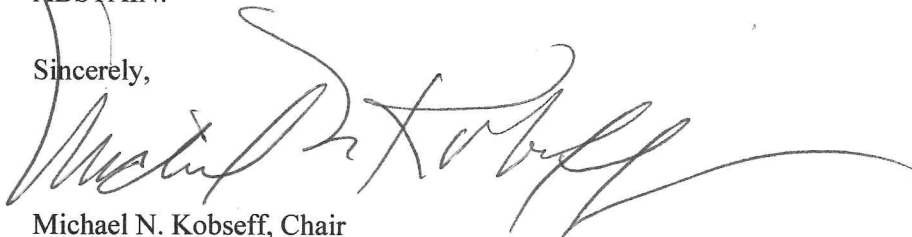
We urge continued vigilance in your Administration so that producers can produce. This vital industry cannot survive without an adequate, reliable supply of water for irrigation. Yet critical food-producing areas in California, and growers in the Klamath Project in southern Oregon and northern California, face major shortages in irrigation water supply this year. Respectfully, we have witnessed administrative agency decisions and processes that rely on advocacy science, and that disregard – without explanation – findings of no less an authority than the National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences.<sup>1</sup> This will cause severe hardship to people, many of whom will lose their livelihoods and family farm legacies. It will harm rural communities as a whole. And it will harm what your Proclamation properly recognizes as the “national economic supply chain that is critical to our national security and prosperity.”

At this critical time, no one disputes that agricultural production is an essential activity. We don’t want to take for granted that farmers, ranchers, their employees, and supporting businesses will continue to produce a safe, low-cost food supply. It is their nature. Similarly, our police and firefighters are essential. No one would propose that we take away the tools of law enforcement, or that we cut off the water supply for firefighters. But the public does not appreciate that to take away irrigation water is to eliminate an essential activity. We ask for your leadership in carrying forward the message that agriculture is essential, and particularly that water for irrigated agriculture is equally essential. To that end, we request that your Administration continue to take the maximum possible steps to ensure accountability in agency decision-making. We also request that your Administration take prompt action under all applicable executive authority to ensure irrigation water is delivered, so that producers can produce.

This letter was approved by the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors on March 24, 2020, by the following vote:

AYES:	Supervisors Criss, Haupt, Valenzuela, Nixon and Kobseff
NOES:	NONE
ABSENT:	NONE
ABSTAIN:	NONE

Sincerely,



Michael N. Kobseff, Chair  
Board of Supervisors

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<sup>1</sup> An article from the National Academy of Sciences titled *Higher Water Level Not Scientifically Justified To Protect Fish in Klamath Lake and River* outlines that there is “no clear connection between water levels in Upper Klamath Lake and conditions that are adverse to suckers. For example, fish kills in the lake have not been linked to years of low water levels.... In fact, the highest recorded increase in the number of adult suckers occurred in a year when water levels were low.” (The National Academies of Sciences, 2002) However, subsequent Biological Opinions and court rulings have required that lake levels be increased resulting in inadequate irrigation deliveries for Klamath Project farmers and ranchers. Over the last 20 years in spite of higher lake levels, sucker populations have continued to decline by over 80% according to the United States Geological Services.

cc: Congressman Doug LaMalfa  
Congressman Greg Walden  
Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Senator Kamala Harris  
Senator Jeff Merkley  
Senator Ron Wyden  
Senator Brian Dahle  
Senator Linthicum  
Assemblywoman Meghan Dahle  
Representative Werner Reschke  
Modoc County Board of Supervisors  
Klamath County Board of Supervisors  
Paul Simmons, Klamath Water Users Association  
Mr. Alan Mikkelsen, Department of the Interior  
Secretary David Bernhardt, Department of the Interior  
Aurelia Skipwith, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service