

Last week I was driving from the Central Coast of California through the interior regions of the San Joaquin Valley ~~on my way to the family ranch in the~~ foothills of the Sierras. On my way I saw California's abundant crops and livestock. Along the coast there were many acres of lettuce, avocados and lemons. In the Great Central Valley, stretching all the way from Bakersfield to Redding, I was amazed at the countless acres of pistachios, walnuts, grapes, oranges, almonds and other crops. Did you know that almonds are the best selling export in our state? ~~Exceeding~~ *Producing* ~~even the wine exports.~~ *1.5 billions pounds Annually 50,000 jobs!*

The need for water in our state was ~~obvious~~. As I traversed from west to east the land became drier, dustier and hotter. In most places the only spots of green were ~~where irrigation~~ *irrigated by damps!* turned the dusty brown landscape into an oasis of ~~green~~, mostly irrigated from water brought ~~along~~ one of California's famous canals. Occasionally there was an orchard or field where irrigation had stopped. The results were catastrophic, ~~at least as far as raising food is concerned.~~ Trees were dead or dying and the weeds were somehow resisting the drought better than the trees. For those who want everything to go back to its natural state, I think you should reconsider—do you like food? I do.

There were numerous signs displayed along the highway by farmers protesting the lack of water due to recent legislation that cuts back on water for agriculture. Another sign put the crisis more positively, "Where water flows, food grows."

It is haunting to think of what would happen if the canals no longer flow with water, or if it was somehow diverted for other purposes, like lawns and golf courses.

Water is a limited resource that is likely to become scarcer, especially in California and the ~~American~~ Southwest. Hard choices are being made about where to allocate it. Who needs the water more? The farmers or the fish? You can un-damn the Klamath but many farmers are going to go out of business if you do. Farmers raise food and food is a needed commodity, ~~last I checked.~~ The moral high ground is hard to pick here; it largely depends on your self-interest. If you make your living fishing, of course, you want the dams removed and the fish to thrive. If you make your living farming, you naturally point out that farming requires water diverted from rivers. It is unlikely that water will be sufficient to provide amply for both: therefore the voters and the politicians have some very tough choices to make about who gets the water and who gets the broken cistern.

Much of the water in the ~~Friant-Kern and other~~ canals comes from rivers up north—mostly northern California. Since we have an abundance of water, we should share it, but we should also be fairly compensated for our H₂O. Water is going to be increasingly valuable in California and throughout the Southwest—especially if the drought continues.

I say we sell the water and get at much as we can for it. Someday water will be more valued than gold or oil—I hope that day is far away, but fear ^{that} it may come soon.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment