1 - I am a participant in the State Water Plan - Update 2009 (I was on the Advisory Committee for Update 2005). At the All Regions Forum meeting in San Jose on June 2-3, 2008, representatives from urban areas were expressing the sentiment that the Governor had asked them to conserve 20% by 2020 -- and when was agriculture going to be asked to conserve its share.

2 - Also at that meeting I spoke with Rick Soehren, Chief, Office of Water Use Efficiency and Transfers, CDWR, and asked that the 80% developed water use by agriculture be modified. He asked me to follow up with input for his consideration, which I have just done.

People read that ag uses 80% of California's water. The statement on the webpage (http://www.owue.water.ca.gov/agdev/index.cfm) reads: "... with agriculture using 80 per cent of California's developed water supply." This can easily be (and often is) misread as agriculture using 80 per cent of California's water - with the assumption that urban uses 20% & no inclination of the amount designated for environmental purposes. This is a large difference and its correction is a matter of importance in that it is being quoted by newspapers ranging from the SF Chronicle to the LA Times to online Blogs.

The broader reality is that - Most of this production would not be possible without irrigation. In years with normal levels of precipitation, California agriculture uses roughly 32.4 million acre-feet of water to irrigate 9.6 million acres. In such years, California receives about 200 million acre-feet of water from precipitation and imports from Colorado, Oregon, and Mexico. Of this total supply, 40 to 50 percent is dedicated for agricultural, urban and environmental use, with roughly 41 percent of the dedicated supply being used for irrigated agriculture. (See attached file for full write up.)

I am attaching a file with the full proposed statement.

Best regards,

Anisa Divine

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Resources Planning & Management Section
IMPERIAL IRRIGATION DISTRICT

Attachment:

Agricultural Water Use Program

The Office of Water Use Efficiency works to disseminate and transfer information on improved irrigation technologies and to identify and help develop technologies and farming methods that improve water use efficiency.

California's Irrigated Agriculture:

California's unique geography and Mediterranean climate have allowed the State to become one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world. The Sierra Nevada Mountain range that lines the eastern edge of the State capture and store winter precipitation that can be then used for summer irrigation in the Central Valley. This water, combined with the Mediterranean climate permits the growing of a great number of crops. California produces over 250 different crops and leads the nation in production of 75 commodities. California is the sole producer of 12 different commodities including almonds, artichokes, dates, figs, raisins, kiwifruit, olives, persimmons, pistachios, prunes and walnuts.

Most of this production would not be possible without irrigation. California agriculture uses roughly 32.4 million acre-feet of water 9.6 million acres.

California's population growth and greater awareness of environmental water requirements has increased the pressure on California agriculture to use water more efficiently and to make more water available for urban and environmental uses. Decreasing agricultural water use is difficult for several reasons. First, California agricultural water use when considered on a broad regional scale, for the most part, is very efficient. Individual fields and farms in some regions may have low efficiencies, but water that is not used on one farm or field is often used on a nearby farm or field. Secondly, for most crops, production and yield is directly related to crop water use. A decrease in applied water will often directly decrease yield. The key is management strategies that improve water use efficiency without decreasing yield.

There are technologies and management strategies available that conserve water while maintaining yield and production standards. These technologies and management strategies like improved irrigation scheduling and crop specific irrigation management often not only conserve water, but also save energy and decrease growers' costs.

Hyperlink language for dedicated supply – (from 160-05, Volume 1, Chapter 3)

In average water years, like 2000, California receives about 200 million acre-feet of water from precipitation and imports from Colorado, Oregon, and Mexico. Of this total supply, about 50 to 60 percent is either used by native vegetation, evaporates to the atmosphere, provides some of the water for agricultural crops and managed wetlands (effective precipitation), or flow to Oregon, Nevada, the Pacific Ocean and salt sinks like the saline groundwater aquifers and Salton Sea.

The remaining 40 to 50 percent (denoted as dedicated supply) is distributed among urban and agricultural uses, used to protect and restore the environment, or stored in surface and groundwater reservoirs for later use. In any year some of the dedicated supply includes water that is used multiple times (reuse) and water stored from previous years. Ultimately, about a third of the dedicated supply flows to the Pacific Ocean (in part to meet environmental requirements) or to other salt sinks. Statewide, local surface water and groundwater supplies make up about 50% of California's total dedicated supply in an average water year (percentage varies regionally).

In wet and drier years, like 1998 and 2001, respectively, the total supply and distribution of the dedicated supply to various uses differ significantly from the average year. For figures and tables related to California's water supply, see Bulletin 160-05, Volume 1 Chapter 3 California Water Today. For more information on the state's recent water supplies and uses, see Bulletin 160-05, Volume 3 Chapter 1 State Summary.