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“Water Vital to Agriculture, Entire State”

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My whole life I have been involved with agriculture in one way or another. I believe, like many of you, that water is the lifeblood of our communities and our farms.

Here in the San Luis Valley, we have the first water right of 1852 in the State of Colorado; the People's Ditch was the first irrigation ditch in Colorado and is still in operation today. In addition, the acequia's irrigation system was put in to place in Costilla and Conejos counties early on by Spanish settlers and some of my ancestors, and we still utilize this system to water crops and surrounding land.

Based on a 1-4 scale with 4 being the worst. We are currently in a D3 drought this year and are in a major need of moisture. The data analyzed by the US Drought monitor further identifies the need.

As such, the San Luis Valley and Southern Colorado is currently suffering from the effects of this severe drought. During this time, the drought has made it more difficult for agriculture farmers who are in need of moisture in order to support their crops for harvest. Many of us farmers have relied on the surface water runoff for water in past years. However, our reservoirs are low, water is scarce and we are in need of moisture to keep going.

This year, the river water has been depleted due to lack of snow pack in the mountains and many individuals are utilizing their irrigation wells to supply water to the crops through center pivot irrigation.

The farms in our communities are now struggling to keep crops alive.

While a lot of the state does not understand why this is important, this struggle could lead to a domino effect for the state. For example, if the farmers are unable to keep their crops alive, then they would be unable to harvest and sell their produce. This could lead to not only higher prices in produce, but could stop the farmer from stimulating the local economy by buying the things needed to maintain the farm. If they are unable to buy more for their farm, they cannot produce more crops and the businesses they buy from would not have the revenue they need to be sustainable.

This is an ongoing cycle. The drought leads to more issues than simply not enough water. It could lead to a loss of economic development and business.

In short, the San Luis Valley and Southern Colorado are a huge agriculture area where we depend greatly on our water and need to continue to keep our water in the basin. Please join me and continue to buy local and help the local farmers in our area.

I remain committed to advocating for agriculture and for you in this important time of food insecurity, as well as for our precious resource - water - and the communities we call home!