

WATER LEAGUE

*Water League engages the public
in water stewardship.*

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In Memoriam

John L. Gardiner

March 2, 2025

To: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and
Water

Representative Ken Helm, Co-Chair

Representative Mark Owens, Co-Chair

Representative Sarah Finger McDonald, Vice-Chair

Representatives Court Boice, Annessa Hartman, Bobby Levy, Pam Marsh,

Susan McLain, Anna Scharf

RE: Water League supports HB 3346, which Requires the Department of Land
Conservation and Development (DLCDD) to study siting of energy facilities in
designated critical ground water areas.

Dear Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair Finger McDonald, and
committee members,

Water League supports the concept of replacing irrigation water uses in Critical
Groundwater Areas with non-carbon-based energy production, such as solar
and wind. We recognize the sanctity of Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) land, and
support the concept of a solar and wind farms as a reasonable alternatives to a
crop farms. We support the replacement of all eligible irrigable lands to solar and
wind when the negative impacts are not unreasonable.

Our support presumes that the DLCDD study would address many important
questions related to transmission/ interconnection, property taxes, impacts to
flora and fauna, impacts to communities in the region (including economic),
impacts to Indigenous ancestral lands, and how EFU zoned lands will adapt to
preserve the same character.

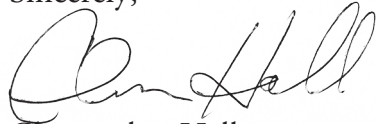
In particular, we support resolving questions about:

- How irrigation and solar uses coincide, where a center pivot on a quarter section (160 acres) that leaves 31.4 acres dry on the 4 corners (7.85 acres) can host energy production;
- How cancellation of water rights that authorize water use on larger expanses, such as entire center pivot irrigation places of use, can host energy production;
- How local electrical connections among disparate locations, both large and small, will connect to statewide transmission systems. Is existing electrical distribution infrastructure capable, in part, of supporting energy production; if not, what is the scale of new infrastructure?
- How EFU lands will retain their rural character given the industrial nature of solar power infrastructure;
- How non-irrigation lands would integrate into the program to replace irrigation with energy production.

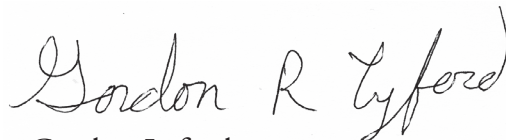
Although we have concerns about another bill, HB 3112, which buys out worthless water rights in CGWAs, we do support the concept of using funds from water right cancellations in CGWAs to fund the energy production facilities outlined in HB 3346.

We may submit additional testimony when the -1 amendment has been published clarifying related questions about the proposed details on replacing irrigation with energy production in regions where the state has designated a CGWA.

Sincerely,



Christopher Hall
Executive Director



Gordon Lyford
Vice-President, CWRE #341