

From: KERN COUNTY LAND COMPANY
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EXbrook 7-4100
(Robert W. Jackson)

FOR RELEASE
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BAKERSFIELD, Calif., July 14 -- The Bureau of Reclamation today was criticized by a large group of San Joaquin Valley land owners for attempting, in violation of long-standing policy, to impose the 160-acre limitation provision of Reclamation Law on irrigation water stored in Isabella reservoir on the Kern River near here.

In a sharply-worded protest, Glenn E. Stanfield, North Kern Water Storage District president, denounced recent Bureau action which would have the effect of "moving back in time" the progress of Kern County agriculture without regard for existing economies available in modern, large-scale farming practices.

R. J. Pafford, Jr., director of the Bureau of Reclamation regional office in Sacramento, has notified directors of the North Kern and three other water districts that the Bureau contends that Kern River water stored behind Isabella Dam may not be delivered to any owner of more than 160 acres of land unless such owner has executed a valid recordable contract agreeing to the sale of land owned in excess of 160 acres.

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Stanfield pointed out that about 1,000 land owners use Kern River for irrigation. The North Kern District, he said, is of the opinion that water stored behind Isabella Dam is not subject to Reclamation Law and that a court determination, if required, would uphold the districts' contention.

Stanfield emphasized that Isabella Dam was built primarily for flood control but with the understanding that it would have incidental benefits for the storage of irrigation water. Kern farmers have already paid \$4,573,000, in cash, to the Government as their full share of the Isabella Project cost allocated by the Government to the incidental function of irrigation storage.

According to long-established Bureau of Reclamation policy and practice, he said, acreage limitations have not applied to projects such as Isabella, after the irrigation share of the cost is paid. He added that the Bureau's attempt to change this long-standing policy is "without justification".

Stanfield explained that Isabella Dam does not store government water and is not used for the purpose of reclaiming arid government land, and that the irrigators have not benefited from interest-free government financing or any other government subsidy.

Stanfield pointed out that the irrigationists consider the 160-acre limitation in the Reclamation Act of 1902 to be "completely outdated and unrealistic" when applied to Kern County agriculture. He cited economic studies by the University of California at Berkeley which show that economies of scale for row-crop farming in Kern County are not realized under 1,000 acres.

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The other three districts are Buena Vista Water Storage District, Tulare Lake Basin Water Storage District, and Hacienda Water District.

William T. Balch, water division manager of Kern County Land Company, which has land holdings and canal operations in the districts affected, said the operations of canal companies affiliated with Kern County Land Company and farming operations on its lands will continue without interruption, pending the resolution of the dispute between the districts and the Bureau.

Completed in 1954 at a cost of \$21 million, Isabella Dam on the Kern River is located 40 miles Northeast from Bakersfield.

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