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NOTES OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE ROUNDTABLE

Thursday, December 15, 2005

FOCUS:

- 1) **Introduction to the Community** – **Susan Ryan**, CEO, Kaiser Permanente, Pages 2 - 7
- 2) **Clean Water As a Healthcare Issue** – **Lloyd G. Carter**, Attorney, Save Our Streams Council, Pages 7 – 15

The purpose of our Community Health Care Roundtables and of our health care projects is to increase health care access that is appropriate medically, geographically, linguistically, and culturally and to improve public health. The Community Health Care Roundtables are funded by individual donors, congregations, Vitamin Cases Consumer Settlement, The California Wellness Foundation, The California Health Care Foundation, The Hewlett Foundation, The Kirsch Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, California Alliance for Family Farmers, California Nutrition Network, The Ecology Center, Occidental College, Roundtable Sponsors, (Health Net, Kaiser Permanente, Children's Hospital Central California), Event and Activity Sponsors, and others.

Updates from Fresno Metro Ministry

1st Topic: Food Stamp Legislation

Jeremy Hofer: The Budget Reconciliation Act passed the House of Representatives by two votes. It's now in the Senate, so we're still really hoping that people will call Boxer and Feinstein. Even though they are Democrats we need to really let them know that we need to not support this act.

2nd Topic: Healthy School Environment Wellness Policy

Edie Jessup: We're getting much closer to a Fresno Unified Healthy School Environment Wellness Policy going to the board. At the first of the year we'll be calling the committee together to look at their proposed revisions to the year-long policy that was worked on by the community. We're very excited about that. It will make us see change in Fresno Unified's environment for our kids. With diabetes and obesity being some of the highest in the state, our leadership in the valley on this could make a great difference in the health of our kids.

3rd Topic: Built Environment Summit

Kathleen Grassi: On November 18th the County Health Department along with Fresno Metro Ministry, Kaiser Permanente, and a number of other community partners sponsored the Building Healthy Neighborhoods in Fresno County Summit that focused on looking at our built environment as a means of improving health, in particular, reducing childhood obesity, adult obesity, and the associated chronic disease risks. We had 110 participants that day. We had a

smorgasbord of presentations that ranged from the public health issues of obesity and chronic disease risk all the way to architects working on complaints of housing projects here in Fresno and around the state as a means of smart growth. We heard from folks talking about the need for more open space and walkable communities. When we talk about built environment we really talk about not what kind of program can you have in a school or in a senior center or a gym necessarily. We're really talking about what our neighborhoods look like and how that inspires and supports and promotes families to be physically active together. Our intent with the summit in November was a first step, so we had a strategic planning session at the end of the day. We got a lot of good ideas from the participants and we'll be continuing to meet in 2006 to begin the process of identifying some of the win-wins that we can take on for Fresno, both urban and rural communities, to improve our built environment for physical activity.

4th Topic: Grant for Obesity Reduction

Kathleen Grassi: The second item that Walt mentioned is a grant that has been awarded to California State University, Central California Center for Health and Human Services. This grant will also focus on obesity reduction throughout the region, so this is a six-county project. It will involve Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, Kings, and Kern Counties, the university, and community partners. Here in Fresno, Fresno Metro Ministry will be our community partner and there are other community-based organizations that are being identified in the other counties to work with their local health departments and the university. This project will be a four-year grant providing close to \$3 million over four years. It has three levels. The first level will be regional. It will involve the university's development of data and research and networking that can be shared across the region for folks working in this geography. The second level will be at the county levels. There will be the bringing together of organizations, individuals, and residents who wish to work on projects like the built environment activities that I mentioned from our summit in November. The third level will be specific identified community neighborhood interventions where we'll be looking at bringing together schools, residents, city resources, and anything else that can come together within a given targeted neighborhood or neighborhoods to improve access to healthy foods and physical activity resources.

Susan Ryan, CEO, Kaiser Permanente – Introduction to the Community and Reflections on New Position at Kaiser Permanente

Good morning everyone. I am absolutely delighted to be here this morning and to share some of the great things that Kaiser Permanente is doing with our community partners and other health systems in this area as well as throughout Northern California. We have been very, very active in so many ways in this community. For me it's just really a privilege to have been able to join Kaiser Permanente in Fresno. By way of a little bit of background to introduce myself to all of you, this is my third participation in this forum and I really want to acknowledge the tremendous work that you're doing. I started healthcare about 106 years ago working in the public health system in San Mateo County. I actually got that job when I was working for one of the county supervisors who had been on the board for a lot of years and all of a sudden I found out that he wasn't re-elected and I needed a job. Healthcare had always been a very, very strong interest for me as I supported the county supervisor and his constituency, and I was afforded the opportunity to work in the public health system for the county mental health system and did that for about five years. I then went on to a tour of duty for nine years with UCSF and learned a tremendous

amount about academic healthcare and the need to really participate with growing future physicians and other healthcare practitioners and the importance of partnership in the community. I later left UCSF and joined the University of Maryland at Baltimore, which was a very, very different community than I had experienced in the Bay Area. There was a lot of challenge in the mid Atlantic area, and part of the mission of the pediatric department that I supported was to outreach into the communities where there wasn't access to healthcare particularly for young children and children in need. After shoveling snow for about four or five years I came back to California and joined Kaiser Permanente. I've been with the company now for almost nine years and I have seen a tremendous transformation not only in the philosophy and the mission of Kaiser Permanente but really, I think, in refining my own values and the importance of partnership and community collaboration.

Kaiser Permanente came to the Fresno area in the mid 1980s starting with a few doctors and 500 members. That has grown to 250 physicians and 125,000 members.

Kaiser Permanente is an integrated, prepaid healthcare system. People look at it in a variety of different ways. We have what we like to call the three-legged stool. We have the health plan, we have the hospitals, and we have our medical group, and I think really it's that three-legged stool and that partnership that creates the success and the ease of administration and the ease of access into our system for our members. One of the questions that I'm frequently asked is what's really important to Kaiser Permanente. We see lots of buildings going up, but the real underpinning of Kaiser Permanente is quality healthcare not only to our members but to the community at large. Kaiser Permanente has had in its DNA healthy systems in preventive healthcare since the company was founded over 50 years ago by Dr. Garfield. He was supporting the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam and recognized that there were a lot of injuries in the workplace and people didn't have access to healthcare and it wasn't affordable to them, so he started a prepayment plan of about ten cents out of a paycheck and healthcare was then given back to those workers. That philosophy continued to grow. In about the mid 80s Kaiser Permanente came into the Central Valley/Fresno area with just a few doctors and about 500 members. Today we serve over 125,000 people in this area and we have almost 250 physicians, and many of them from the UC system are absolutely interested in coming into our system.

In the past 18 months Kaiser Permanente has received the triple crown award for the delivery of quality healthcare

The qualifications to come into Kaiser are pretty high. The bar is raised, and we take the cream of the crop. We are very proud to say that we have continuously received numerous acknowledgements for the quality healthcare that we deliver. In the past 18 months we received in the healthcare circles what's known as the triple crown award. Fresno's Kaiser Permanente from the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Hospitals received a perfect score in its review by JCAHO in its last survey. That's a pretty lofty achievement and one that our team is extremely proud of because we know that we have the systems in place to continue to give excellent and quality care to the community. We were also acknowledged as the best in California by the National Committee on Quality Assurance, and the third part of that triple crown was an acknowledgement as being one of the best in California by the California

Cooperative Healthcare Reporting Initiative. As many of you know in this environment, the reporting of our activities to all the regulatory agencies that review our work is pretty lofty, and having that kind of acknowledgement is really a testimony to the physicians and staff that give this kind of outreach back to our neighborhoods.

Kaiser Permanente has done many things for the community through volunteerism and by partnering with others

Over the past eight years we have seen our community partnerships grow tremendously. You will see probably a lot of outreach as we look at the summits and our Neighbors in Health Program, and we're particularly pleased to say that over the past year Kaiser Permanente in Fresno alone has extended over six million dollars of services to the community. We do this not only through our mobile van where we can go in and provide inoculations to children but through information, through technology, through the outreach of our employee ambassadors, and through the volunteerism of our physicians in so, so many ways. We continue to do this investment in other unique ways. One of the opportunities coming forward is a partnership to extend over seven million dollars' worth of technology to community collaboratives in Northern California to provide greater access to information. As many of you know, building the infrastructure in our community health systems is often a tremendous challenge. Those regulatory environments and just the detail required to keep our activities going and accountable is a real challenge, and so this system that Kaiser Permanente is partnering with to outreach will connect these networks together.

Kaiser Permanente is working on a new electronic medical records system that will make patient information much easier for providers to obtain

Our information technology is also taking shape within Kaiser Permanente in the form of our new electronic medical records system. About three years ago we recognized that we were not only running out of space, but the information that is needed to provide quick, easy information to our providers was becoming a challenge. We are embarking on almost a billion dollar program to create an electronic medical record. It's really a system that provides information from the point of admission through the billing and the actual medical record itself, and this will be a network that connects all of the Kaiser Permanente hospitals and clinics throughout the United States. Right now Kaiser Permanente is in nine geographic regions throughout the nation. This will be a technology step unparalleled to any other system. We're tremendously proud and pleased that we are able to do this to continue to better the environment of healthcare.

Kaiser Permanente was awarded the Ellis J. Bonner Community Leadership Award for partnering with local growers to establish a farmers market in our community

I hope many of you have been able to come by our campus and enjoy our farmers market. We have a tremendous opportunity to partner with our growers in this region, and we have plans to open additional ones in so many other parts of not only this region, but this is an effort to improve the health of our communities all the way through the United States. Our farmers market activity engages the very same valley-based growers in Fresno participating in markets throughout Northern California. In fact, this farmers market program was recently awarded in

2005 the Ellis J. Bonner Community Leadership Award by Americus Health Insurance Plan, and this industry award really recognizes the creative efforts by any health plan to identify and continue to improve communities.

The mission of Kaiser Permanente is to continue to grow healthy communities to make sure that access to healthcare is geographically, linguistically, culturally, and medically appropriate to diverse populations

I'm very pleased to have with me today my partner in community service, LeeAnn Parry, who has been a wonderful mentor to me in the four months that I have been with Fresno in terms of the tremendous work that Kaiser has been doing in this community. LeeAnn has put together just a few highlights for me to share with you, and then I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the activities that we will have going forward in the future. We have a very active Community Benefit Program that looks at the needs of the community. It's done through an assessment. We've worked closely with so many of you in this room as well as outside school districts. As I mentioned, last year we contributed over six million dollars to the community in local services and regional grants. The mission of Kaiser Permanente is quite simple: to continue to grow healthy communities to make sure that access to healthcare is geographically, linguistically, culturally, and medically appropriate to diverse populations. We're very proud that our constituency in our medical centers reflects the diversity of our communities. We have physicians in Fresno that carry with them over 60 different language skills. We have programs that support specific populations and we'll look in the future to continue to expand those activities. A strong effort and one of importance to us is to increase the health-related activities for children and their families, particularly those who are under-served due to poverty, language, or cultural barriers. A number of years ago Kaiser Permanente embarked on a program called Neighbors in Health, and through this we outreached to families. We tried to do this at the beginning of the school year when families and children may need inoculation, information about healthcare, and so on. In Fresno alone we reach out to over 200 families on this day of giving and we expect that this program will continue to grow as we partner with other groups who have expressed a keen interest in outreaching with us to serve this population. We also work in a number of ways to support civic and nonprofit organizations. In Fresno alone the Kaiser Permanente family has over 114 of our employees and physicians serving on 77 boards and commissions throughout this community. One of the things that we can do to partner with groups is to bring our expertise and our knowledge as well as some of our deep pockets into the community to continue to improve the quality of our activities. Nothing succeeds like a partnership, and for me as the CEO of this great medical center I'm extremely proud to continue to encourage this activity among our teams. In fact, this has been a very strong effort for us as we are just finishing our budget cycle for 2006, and you will certainly see a lot more of that outreach and engagement. We are also engaging through a collaborative with our other medical centers in the community. Tim Joslin has reached out to me and we've had some tremendous conversations about what we can do better to support the community. I've also had conversations with Matthew Abraham at Saint Agnes, and so we're really working together. Often, running a medical center can be a pretty competitive business, but that competition really needs to be put aside to work in collaboration because that's the only way that our communities will stay healthy and people will stay out of the emergency rooms. Many of you know about our Healthy Eating, Active Living Program. This is an initiative to address the obesity epidemic in

our geography, and we do that with so many of you in this room. We realize that clinical approaches certainly have their place, but it's often the work that goes well beyond that that creates the kind of healthy community that we need. Local grants are provided from this initiative and we have provided awards to Stone Soup, Centro La Familia, the West Fresno Healthcare Coalition, as well as Fresno Metro Ministry in this regard. We also have a number of activities where we're continuing to support our community clinics, and this is really an ongoing commitment to strengthen the safety net clinics and hospitals that care for the uninsured and underinsured in this environment. In the next year Kaiser Permanente will be extending over \$7.6 million to earmark investments to improve IT enhancements, as I mentioned earlier, and this is intended to manage so many of the chronic conditions and establish electronic medical records in our community clinics to help manage these conditions. One of the local awardees in this effort is the Madera-based Darin Camarena United Health Centers and Central Valley Health Network, so we're extremely proud to continue to partner in that way.

Kaiser Permanente is working hard to attract and retain quality healthcare workers

I've talked a lot about the good things. There are also some challenges ahead for us, and these are some of the things that keep me awake. Training and recruiting of skilled healthcare workers is a real challenge. We're facing an aging population of employees. Making sure that we have the pipeline of skilled workers coming in in all ranges and in all fields of the industry is going to be paramount to continuing the work that needs to be done. In this regard we're working with Fresno State and other academic institutions, UCSF among them, to attract and retain quality healthcare workers. Another challenge is adapting to the regulatory environment and working with our legislators, many of whom continue to impose some interesting requirements upon us. We've also got the challenges of changing technology not to mention the pharmaceutical challenges and regulations as well as just the overall cost of pharmaceuticals. I see that I've got about 8 minutes left and so I'd like to entertain some questions.

Participant question: How closely are you related to your patients who are out of foundation areas who have health issues of an emergency nature? How do they get into your system, or do they get into your system?

Susan Ryan: They do get into our system. While we have our own hospitals and clinics certainly in the areas, we also have relationships with many, many other extended networks in rural areas. We make sure that our patients receive the care that they need regardless of the setting. It's not uncommon for us if there is a trauma of one of our members to make sure that we transport them to either a Kaiser facility or a Kaiser plan facility in those extended areas.

Participant question: How are you dealing with the Part D mess?

Susan Ryan: We are continuing to work through that. There are many unknowns still as Part D rolls out, and we have a very robust pharmacy operation that will continue to support that effort.

Participant question: I'm real concerned because under the Part D I know the antipsychotic drugs are going to be covered. However, there's a problem with the anxiety and depression

medications as far as formulas. I'm wondering if someone is looking at the records of the psychiatric patients especially to figure out how they're going to be covered.

Susan Ryan: One of the advantages in Kaiser Permanente is we can sometimes step outside those prescribed formularies for members who require a different kind of prescription, so because of the uniqueness of our plan we are able to be perhaps a little more flexible than other systems.

Ray Ensher: I serve on the insurance committee of the California Retired Teachers Association and I constantly get complaints from people up in the northern part of the state that cannot subscribe to Kaiser Permanente because of a 30-mile rule. Are they going to get any kind of facilities up there in the northern part of the state?

Susan Ryan: Actually, we have clinics in the Roseville area and we are working with some out-of-plan hospitals and clinics to get past that 30-mile rule because we do have members who have signed up for Kaiser in this area and have later retired in those communities and it does become a challenge. We recognize that, and it is a tremendous hurdle to overcome with all of the regulatory restrictions around us.

Eddie Jessup: I'd like to comment on your social marketing campaign, the Thrive Campaign. I know that it's a very expensive thing to do, but of the social marketing campaigns around healthy eating and active living I think you really have hit multiple media markets and when I see it in the paper I just think it's really, really fine. I always hate spending that much money on that rather than healthcare directly for people, but I do think that the positive notion that it communicates is really important.

Susan Ryan: Going out into the advertising world was a real struggle for the company because philosophically that's not where our commitment had been. It had always been in direct care giving, but we also realized that there are many, many other people that we can outreach by our opportunities to take health promotion and health education and put it up on the billboard or out in the media. Many of the physicians that you see on the billboards or even on television right now are active Kaiser physicians and they practice what they preach.

Lloyd G. Carter, Attorney, Chair of Save Our Streams Council – Clean Water As A Healthcare Issue

I believe that water politics dominate any civilization, and the control of our water in this valley, it's no secret, is held by agriculture. Agriculture controls about 90 percent of the surface water, which is river water, and about 85 percent of the groundwater, so they are the 800-pound gorilla in the San Joaquin Valley. I'm not here to bash agriculture. Obviously we all need food so it's pretty obvious that we need farming, but the further you wade into the murky world of agribusiness and water politics the stranger things become.

The L.A. Times recently had an article discussing the link between pesticides and Parkinson's disease

Yesterday I brought the L.A. Times article of a couple of weeks ago about the link that's being established between Parkinson's disease and pesticides. It's becoming stronger and stronger. Certainly those of you who are health professionals will be interested. Let me just read a couple of things from it. It was from the November 27th Sunday Edition of the Los Angeles Times on page 1. It starts with a farmer in Merced County who has Parkinson's. The two paragraphs here that I circled said, "Scientists have amassed a growing body of evidence that longterm exposure to toxic compounds, particularly pesticides, can destroy neurons and trigger Parkinson's in some people." Then there's a quote from Dr. Freya Kamel. She's an epidemiologist with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences who has documented a high rate of neurological problems in farmers who use pesticides. She says scientists are "definitely there beyond a doubt in showing that environmental toxicants have to be involved in some cases of Parkinson's." This is an issue near and dear to my heart because my father passed away from Parkinson's last year. How much of a problem is Parkinson's in the San Joaquin Valley? We don't know because there's no registry. I'm all too aware of the complexity of establishing a cause for a particular illness and trying to trace that back to an individual toxin, particularly in water supplies. It's no surprise to anyone here in the room that this valley is the most chemically drenched place on earth. There are more pesticides per pound per acre than anywhere on the planet. Where does it all go? Well, about 1 percent actually reaches the target, which is the insects, and 99 percent of it is either dispersed into the air or it goes into the ground. Some of you remember I think it was Scientific American Magazine had a story 10 or 15 years ago about toxic fog. The toxins volatilize and they attach to the fog particles, so we're not just driving around here in water vapor this morning. There are toxins that cling to the fog. I had a lot of dealings with doctors and health professionals as a journalist for the Bee for a few years in the mid 80s and then I spent 17 years with United Press International, and I did experience a phenomena of when doctors would talk to me off the record and express personal misgivings but they did not want to be quoted in the newspaper and they certainly didn't want to venture an opinion. I knew one doctor who moved out of the San Joaquin Valley because he told me it was not a healthy enough place to raise his children. What do you do as a journalist when you hear these things?

Allergists in Fresno notice a huge increase in respiratory infections at the same time the cotton defoliant is sprayed in November

Every November all the allergists' offices in Fresno are overflowing, and one thing that you have to think about is they're spraying the defoliants on several hundred thousand acres of cotton on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley. The prevailing wind pattern is from the west to the east, and people act up. You hear our local weathermen talk about the pollen in the air, which I don't doubt, but then when you talk to the doctors, which I did as a reporter for the Bee, they would tell me, "Yeah, there's got to be some kind of cause and effect between defoliants and illness." I was told that defoliants are essentially a chemical cousin of agent orange, which is what we sprayed in Viet Nam 35 years ago and defoliated half the country. This is something similar that they spray on the cotton to make the leaves wilt and die so that they can harvest more easily. That's kind of scary. Any allergist will tell you that in November when they start spraying, all of a sudden their offices are full of people. That's an air quality issue. I don't profess a lot of expertise on that, but I think it's something that health professionals in the valley should certainly be thinking about.

***Because the San Joaquin Valley is essentially a desert, the wealth of the valley
comes from the Sierra snowpack***

I know one way that you guys try to discern trends is that you need some accurate record keeping. Twenty years ago I was writing about the mess over at Kesterson, of course, which is where the agricultural waste water coming off the west side of the San Joaquin Valley was funneled, ironically, into a wildlife refuge where it was being touted as a source of water for the ducks and geese out at the Kesterson Refuge, which is near Los Banos. If you know your valley history, there used to be tens of thousands of acres of wetlands along the San Joaquin River. When it got out onto the floor of the valley 100 years ago it spread out and created all these lush wetlands. As agriculture came into the valley the wetlands were dried up. Tulare Lake was the biggest lake west of the Mississippi. It's gone. At the time of the Gold Rush you could take a ferry boat from San Francisco to Bakersfield. The landscape of this valley has been transformed more than any other place on earth in terms of what it was like 150 years ago and what it's like now. Kids coming up through the public school system have no idea of any of this. I'm born and raised in Fresno. I remember my grammar school education. The Farm Bureau provided pamphlets which the teachers dutifully distributed called *Pesticides Are The Farmer's Friend*. This was the environment that I was raised in. We hear every day growing up about how we're the number one farm county in the nation and all the agricultural wealth. There's a relationship between the dominant industry in the valley and the way that the wealth of the valley is distributed. We live in a desert. We have a little bit of a mirage in Fresno with the greenery, but this was essentially a desert. The wealth of this valley comes from the Sierra snowpack. The rivers give life to all of this desert agriculture. It would not be possible without the rivers. I tell people every winter when they look at the Sierra and see that beautiful snow pack, that's a couple billion dollars of public money. If you think about the rivers, the water, think of cash. Things become much clearer. It all starts out as public cash and most of it goes into private pockets. Like I say, 90 percent goes to agriculture. To me the pivotal event of the last fifty years in the valley was not that we were irrigating the east side of the valley but the decision to irrigate the west side of the valley.

We tend to use our ditches and our rivers as garbage dumps and sewer lines

My first ten years as a newsman I didn't think about these things. Now I drive around town and look at the ditches. I wonder why they aren't piped in a major urban area. Hundreds of children have drowned in these Fresno ditches over the decades. Secondly, if you look at the ditches right now they're all drawn down and empty and they're full of garbage. We use our ditches and our rivers as garbage dumps and as sewer lines. When we talk about the protection of drinking water, which was the focus of yesterday's conference, the rivers of this state are conveniently used as sewer lines. The lower San Joaquin River isn't water coming from the Sierra. In Merced County when you go down there and look at the San Joaquin River that's all agricultural runoff and as it gets closer to the delta the cities and the industries along the rivers feel free to dump in their waste water. Sometimes it's "treated." If any of you are familiar with water treatment methods, when they're done right they work, but as in any human endeavor, water doesn't get treated right. If you step back a minute and think about an even more fundamental thing, why is it that we have to so massively treat our drinking water in the first place before we serve it to the public? The water coming out of the snowpack when it melts is pure water. That water is good.

By the time it reaches your tap it's been chlorinated, and in the case of the Northern California water that goes down to the state aqueduct to L.A., it's heavily treated. We've probably all been to L.A. and drank the water down there. It's terrible, which is why drinking water that you buy in the grocery store is a multi-billion dollar business. People don't trust public drinking water supplies and they have every reason to be suspicious. Unfortunately, bottled water has a lot of problems too.

The State of California is over- pumping the delta to supply water to a desert civilization

The delta is the drinking water source for about 22 million people in California, and it's really a sad state of affairs that your government has brought you to the position where they have as a matter of policy decided not to protect the drinking water that originates in the delta, which supplies both the Bay Area and Southern California, from pollutants coming from agriculture or from industry or from so-called treated waste water from cities, so when the delta pumps deliver water that's eventually destined for domestic use it has to be heavily treated. If you are following the fishery issues in the delta, the fishery is collapsing up there and the general consensus is that there are several problems that are causing the ecological collapse of the delta. One is over-pumping. We're pumping far too much water. South of the delta in California it's all desert civilization. We have 20 million plus people in southern California smack in the middle of a desert. They have three little precious lifelines that bring them water. Of course, the Los Angeles River is long gone. They get their water from the Colorado River, and those supplies are in peril now because there has been a continuing drought in the Southwest. They get their water from the Owens Valley, which is a famous water crime in California history. If you've all seen Chinatown you kind of know the story. They also get some water from the state aqueduct.

Agriculture uses about 5 million acre-feet of water to grow 2.4 million acres of subsidized crops

The bulk of water in California still goes to agriculture. Agriculture has a dark side. Obviously there is a lot of pollution associated with industrial, what they would call mainline, agriculture. Industrial agriculture in the valley is hooked on chemicals. Organic agriculture, while it's making progress because the public has an instinctual fear of food that's been heavily poisoned before it's delivered to them, I believe is less than five percent of production agriculture in California. So agriculture controls the water supplies of the state even though they've been losing strength in the last two or three decades. I stopped making strictly environmental arguments about protecting our water supplies a long time ago. I'm just making taxpayer economic arguments and I usually cite as my sources the Heritage Foundation. They're a conservative think tank in Washington, but they're right on the money with regard to subsidies. We subsidize a lot of agriculture in California. The acreage of subsidized cropland in California is 2.4 million acres. That's cotton, rice, corn, wheat, grains, and soy beans. There are only a handful of crops that are subsidized under the old programs from the 1930s. Ironically, thousands of our farmers in the valley do not get governmental support for their crops. The most significant one here locally, of course, is raisins. The raisin industry has had a real rough time in the last few years, and the grape industry is about to go under. But we have 2.4 million acres of land in California planted to subsidize crops. Up until about five years ago we had a million

acres of cotton. It's down to about 600,000 acres this year because prices have been so poor. The water required to grow those 2.4 million acres of subsidized crops is probably five million acre-feet, which is enough for 50 million people. They want to build a new dam up here at Temperance Flat above Friant for a billion dollars, which is only going to generate about 200,000 acre-feet of water. At the same time we're growing 2.4 million acres of surplus crops. Somebody has to stop and wonder when the madness ends. Let me give you an example for cotton, which is often my favorite whipping boy. Just before I came over here I read an op ed piece in the Los Angeles Times from Tuesday by Paul Wolfowitz, who for those of you who are antiwar activists know is one of the big hawks. He's now head of the World Bank, and he was advocating the abolition of agricultural subsidies. We're in trouble in the World Trade Organization for our heavily subsidized cotton industry, which is about \$4 billion a year that we spend for our 25,000 cotton farmers in this country. I thought the problem was bad in California with our 600,000 to 800,000 acres. Texas has just under 6 million acres of cotton, which is just astounding. The production costs of cotton in this valley for farmers is about 70 cents a pound. That figure doesn't even include the heavily subsidized cost of the water. Farmers are buying water for \$50 to \$70 an acre foot, and that water is worth \$600 an acre foot in Southern California for urban uses.

The two primary agencies that are leading the Cal-Fed process have both spent the last century dedicated to giving agriculture whatever it wanted

So where does it all end? There's going to be about a five to six billion dollar initiative that's going to be on next year's ballot in the fall. I've seen a copy of it. It's being advanced by something called a Sierra Fund. I think it's a coalition between agriculture, the cities, and environmentalists. It's kind of a Christmas tree wish list of water projects all over the state. In the last ten years the California voters have voted for three different initiatives totalling three billion dollars that Cal-Fed, which is the infamous consortium of state and federal water agencies trying to fix the problems of the Bay-Delta Region, burned up, and nobody is sure where the money went. The Little Hoover Commission, which is a state watchdog agency that looks into these things, just issued a scathing report last month about the virtual chaos in California's water world and the Bay-Delta Cal-Fed process. I urge you all to go to the Little Hoover Commission website and take a look at that report. It's very sobering. I don't have the exact quote from Einstein, but to paraphrase he said that when you're trying to fix some problem in society it's not a good idea to put the same people in charge of fixing the problem as the ones who caused it. There's a direct parallel here with the Bay-Delta Cal-Fed process. There is one federal agency above all others on the federal side of Cal-Fed, and that's the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. They've spent the last 80 years trying to deliver water to agriculture whether it was wise or not. It's kind of like the triangle of the Pentagon, defense contractors, and politicians. We have that reciprocal kind of situation with agriculture and politicians and the farm lobby in California. That's on the federal side of Cal-Fed. The state side is the California Department of Water Resources. They essentially are a little brother agency to the Bureau of Reclamation, so the two primary agencies that are leading the Cal-Fed process have both spent the last century dedicated to giving agriculture whatever it wanted, reasonable or unreasonable. There is no possible way that you can economically justify a dam for a billion dollars up at temperance Flat above Friant to generate only 200,000 acre-feet of water. The shell game there will be to try to convince the American people, who of course are blissfully unaware of how money will be spent in

California, to build a dam for 200,000 acre-feet of water so that we can continue to grow some more surplus crops. I like to remind people that in 1940 Los Angeles County was the number one farm county in America followed by Orange County in the 1940s. When the Central Valley Project came on line in the San Joaquin Valley in the late 40s is when Fresno County began to emerge in the San Joaquin Valley. We're the San Fernando Valley of the 1940s right now. This is the next Los Angeles right where we are. There are five million people coming into the valley in the next 30 to 40 years. Sixty acres a day in this valley are being urbanized. It's astounding with all the attending air quality problems and water quality problems.

The infrastructure of California's water delivery system is deteriorating and is in need of repair

The last thing I want to touch on is the deteriorating water infrastructure not only in California but in America. We need about \$400 billion worth of infrastructure repair in America for our water systems, which are decaying. Some of them are 250 years old. There was a story in the Sacramento Bee a few days ago about Sacramento and the waste water pipelines under the city and the drinking water delivery systems. Some of them are 100 or 150 years old. They're brick pipes. They deteriorate and crack, and the price tag for Sacramento alone is \$4 billion. This \$5 billion measure that's going to go on the ballot next fall to fix California's water problems is a drop in the bucket. I didn't even spend any time today about our delta levy system. It's on the verge of collapse. When we get our big earthquake – hopefully it won't be in our lifetime, but it's going to be in somebody's lifetime – those levies are going to blow out in the delta and it's going to make New Orleans look like a picnic. At the same time this is going on, developers have proposals to put another 100,000 houses in the delta region below the levy walls. It's just insanity. I don't want to sound like Chicken Little up here, but sooner or later we're going to pay the piper. They had a story in the L. A. Times the day before yesterday about a tsunami hitting the coast. We always think it could only happen in Indonesia and that America is immune from any kind of a catastrophe. A tsunami could hit the Northern California coast including San Francisco, a 100-foot wall of water. I can't remember what the one that hit Indonesia was last Christmas, but I think that one was only 30 or 40 feet. Picture a wall of water hitting the California coastline three times higher than the one that hit Indonesia.

One way to make our voices heard regarding Fresno's water issues is to attend a City Council meeting and ask them questions about our infrastructure

Can we rely on our politicians to truly protect the public's drinking water supplies? I'm not so sure. Mike Chrisman, who is the resources secretary for the State of California, says the governor is going to speak to water issues in his State of the State speech early next year. He's been in office for two years now and I think he's absolutely clueless about water issues. Not to blame the governor, because no one person is responsible for the mess we've gotten ourselves into, but when I saw the story in the Bee about Sacramento's aging water infrastructure I started thinking about Fresno and all the towns up and down the valley. Fresno was established in 1872 when the railroad came through here, and I suspect we've probably had piped water being delivered in Fresno for at least the last 100 years, so I really wonder about the status of the pipes in the downtown area, the older parts of the city. The good thing about Fresno's fast growth is that north of Shaw the water systems are probably not too leaky and contaminated, but I know in

some places they ran the water lines and the sewer lines parallel, so naturally if you've got a cracked cement sewer line adjacent to a cracked water delivery line it's getting into the system. There can also be breaks in the system between places where they test the water and where it gets to your house, so there are lots of things we need to do. One thing I'd like to suggest to this group here is that you go to the City Council meetings. At every City Council meeting they have an open microphone session where the public has to be allowed to speak. Ask them what the status of the city's water infrastructure is, our pipeline system. Ask if it's deteriorating and if it needs repairs. It's the tendency of local governments to always defer maintenance, not only on plumbing systems but on dams. We have 1400 dams in California. Of course, a lot of them are small, but they were built in the Gold Rush era. They're earthen. They're subject to not only mercury poisoning from all of the hydraulic mining that we did in the gold mining industry 120 years ago but also to collapse during earthquakes. Some of us remember the 1971 earthquake in L.A. where that dam almost failed. There are lots of problems ahead. I believe there are solutions, but politicians don't want to talk about these big, huge problems unless we hold their feet to the fire.

In the politics of water, for every winner there is a loser

The wealth of Fresno County was enhanced considerably by bringing water to the west side of the county, the Westlands Water District, in the late 1960s, so it's undeniable that there's wealth being generated on the west side of the county. What nobody here ever thinks about is where did all that water that flows into the Westlands come from? Well, it came from Trinity County, the Trinity River, and there are people in Trinity River who are unhappy that their river got stolen. They are now trying to restore it. There are Native Americans up there, the Hupa and the Yurok Indians, that have a 10,000-year-old salmon-based culture that we destroyed so that Westlands cotton farmers could grow cotton, a subsidized crop. So in the water world, remember, for every winner there's always a loser, so somebody has to give up some water. A good example is that Fresno County is the county of origin along with Madera County for the San Joaquin River. Under the laws of California we're supposed to have first claim on the San Joaquin River along with Madera County for our present needs and our anticipated future growth. Does anybody know how much of the San Joaquin River Fresno County actually gets? Eight percent. Fifty percent of that river goes to those big corporate farms in Kern County. Twenty-five percent goes to Tulare County. Those are both not even in the watershed. I highly recommend that you see the so-called controversial video called "Tales of the San Joaquin" that was actually funded by public money. That was one good thing that Cal-Fed did. It's a fascinating 30-minute video by a film maker named Christopher Beaver. It's a history of the San Joaquin River. In 1915 people from San Francisco were taking a ferry boat up here near Fresno on a cruise. We can't even imagine that now that we have 70 miles of the San Joaquin River dry in the floor of the valley. There's one little piece of good news. I think a settlement is actually near in this 17-year-old lawsuit to put some water back into the San Joaquin for fishery flows. The Natural Resources Defense Council filed their suit back in 1988 against the Bureau to force them to comply with a state law which says that anybody who operates a dam in California has to let enough water in, through, or around the dam to sustain the fishery below in good condition. The Bureau has managed to stall for 17 years, and of course they're backed by the Friant Unit, which is comprised of the irrigation districts along the Friant-Kern Canal. It's no surprise that they're the ones that had been the most fiercely opposed to reviving. We're only talking about putting

maybe 15 percent of the river back into the river bed. Agriculture is going to still get well over 80 percent of the river. If you talk to people from back east they are astounded that any special interest group in society can divert an entire river for it's own personal gain. If you think it's shocking about the San Joaquin River, the Colorado River, the biggest river in the American Southwest, doesn't reach the sea anymore. It's also completely diverted. Most of it is diverted within the U.S. so what we give to the Mexicans is salty and highly degraded. They use it for what they can in their desert agriculture, but the Colorado River Delta is vanished, gone.

Family farms are disappearing in America, and the only thriving farms in the future will be big corporate farms

Steven Stoll wrote a book called The Fruits of Natural Advantage. It is a history of the fruit-growing industry in California. The one fact that sticks out in my mind from that book was that he points out that the fundamental problem of agriculture in this valley has never been an inadequate water supply. The fundamental problem of agriculture in this valley since the 1880s has been overproduction and surplus, which is what just about put the raisin industry under. For the last 120 years surplus production has been a fundamental problem in this valley. Lest you think I'm here to bash farmers, the farmers are at the bottom of the food chain in food production in this country. It's the shippers and the packers and the food processors that make all the money from the food in this valley and the poor farmers are barely surviving, at least the small family farmers. In fact, family farms are disappearing overnight and farms are getting bigger and bigger and bigger and corporatizing.

The west side of the valley is not good farmland. It has to be heavily pre-irrigated before it can be farmed.

The west side of the valley is alkali land. It has to be heavily pre-irrigated. They have to leach all the salts out below the root zone to grow things in a lot of the west side. They also produce this effluent, which is the shallow groundwater that's full of salts, which are generally a nuisance. I'm not talking about table salt, but I'm talking about heavy metals and trace elements like boron, zinc, lead, mercury, molybdenum, and the most pernicious of all, selenium, which is what caused the ecological disaster at Kesterson. It gets into the food chain, it bio-concentrates as it moves up, and you have two-headed ducks at the end of the process. Westlands wants to keep a couple hundred thousand acres of high-selenium land in production and they want you taxpayers to spend a billion dollars to build a drainage system for 400 growers. It's astounding. What is their solution? There are three options: build a pipeline under the coast range and dump it in the ocean near Morro Bay, build a pipeline to the delta and flush it into San Francisco Bay and out to the ocean, and the third option is to build another Kesterson, only this time four times bigger. That's the plan. You can go to the Bureau of Reclamation website and take a look for yourself. All the great civilizations of ancient history were irrigation-based river valleys. If you look at Iraq today when you see that God forsaken desert out there, that was the San Joaquin Valley of 4,000 years ago. They salted it up. We're salting up the west side of the valley. They bring in 3 million tons of salt a year in the irrigation water imported from Northern California, spread it on already salty land, and then hope for the best. There's acreage going out of production right now on the west side. The Westlands will make a fierce argument that we need

to save that land to keep it in production, and indeed, they're slowly making the shift away from cotton and grains to vegetable production, but you have to have an honest cost/benefit ratio.

Jeremy Hofer: Is there a local reservoir of this type of information that we can point people to?

Lloyd Carter: I just did a big piece in the Community Alliance a couple months ago which I would recommend. We have a local group that's environmentalists and farmers called Revive the San Joaquin, www.revivethesanjoaquin.org, which has some stuff from our group. I want to mention one more thing. I write things that the Bee turns down. One was this insidious California Farm Water Coalition. They're spending millions of dollars to convince you that they're your little next door neighbor farmer in overalls and in fact they are large corporate farming operations that primarily fund it along with the banks. They have a website. Go visit it. I'd like to do a Power Point presentation and go through all of their points one by one and tell you what the lies are. As a result of my frustration at getting the word out in the Bee, I've started doing a blog. There's a national environmental website on the Internet called Grist, www.grist.org, which is excellent, and there's a lot of talk about California water.

Participant question: Do we the people give the federal government the right to sell our water to private companies?

Lloyd Carter: Yes, you do. Your state Water Resource Control Board has oversight authority for the permits that the Bureau of Reclamation uses to take up to 7 million acre-feet a year out of our rivers. So we give the water away to the federal government. I've always argued let's at least put a surcharge. Here's California with billions in deficits and we're giving away several billion dollars a year in water to the federal government. Charge them and let them up the rates on the farmers. The farmers are only paying 10 to 15 percent of the market value of the water.

Rev. Walt Parry: A major increase in our population would be cows. Can you in ten seconds address that?

Lloyd Carter: There are 2.6 million cows in the valley. That's more cows than people. Each cow produces the equivalent waste of 20 humans annually, and if you do the math the 2.6 million cows is the equivalent of more than 50 million people living in the San Joaquin Valley right now. An enormous amount of waste is by and large going into the groundwater. The dairy industry in this valley is transplanted from the Chino Valley in Southern California over the last 30 years. The Chino Valley Aquifer Groundwater bank is completely destroyed from the dairies, which is inevitably going to happen in this valley. The aquifer under the valley, which is our reserve supply in times of drought, will be non-potable.