

Chris Stearns

My comments made on 6/11/2020 to this committee about the depletion of groundwater reserves in the state of Arizona by foreign owned alfalfa farms there have recently gained more public attention. The cable program "What on Earth" which searches the globe's satellite photography recently witnessed the recent formation of 180 MILES of crevices that have recently formed throughout Arizona that the television program ascribed to that same depletion of groundwater resources in Arizona. It has also been going on for decades in California's central valley, where lands have also actively subsided. This problem impacts property, infrastructure and especially people's homes! The only comparison I could make is with Florida's falling water tables creating sinkholes to appear with all their consequent loss of property on the land surface.

Poor water management does have serious consequences for the public. Many of you do not know that I have been a Conservation District Associate Member in my county since '94. Before that time I worked on a dryland grain farm in North Dakota mostly cleaning organic grain for market. I used the same machinery cleaning forest seeds for WA DNR. In North Dakota (north-central) I watched as most businesses in a small town disappeared as farms consolidated and residents moved away leaving only unoccupied houses in town, filled to the brim with farm tools, all owned by the regional auctioneer waiting for sale.

Drying out our upstream counties has real consequences to those who still remain. If not enough people working our lands remain, at some point a threshold is reached where vital businesses leave, which after a while, devastates our small rural communities. I've seen it occur! Chris Stearns
Thurston PUD Commissioner