

Watch our new interview with VanderSloot in the video player above. On Tuesday, we will speak with two local farmers who are affected by the issue.

Below is a transcript of VanderSloot's statements made at the Melaleuca Freedom Celebration:

*Good evening and welcome. This is Frank VanderSloot with Melaleuca.*

*The shell that burst into the sky just moments ago was not part of the show. We sent that shell up to get everyone's attention. Tonight, we will dedicate 31 minutes of fireworks to honor the veterans who gave their lives so that we can be a free nation..*

*But for the next 3 ½ minutes I want to call your attention to some other heroes who live in our midst. Given the serious situation that has developed in our region over the past 30 days, I thought we should take a moment before the show and inform you of some alarming facts that you may not be aware of.*

*The farmers in our area desperately need your support. As you know, last month the Governor ordered 500,000 acres of farmland to be shut down. What you may not know is that there are only 900,000 acres under groundwater irrigation in our entire region. That means the Governor's order would have shut down more than half of all those farms stretching from Dubois and Ashton to Pocatello.*

*The effect on our economy would have been devastating. Not only would this order have caused hundreds of families to lose their farms, but because most of our local economy is based on agriculture, dozens of industries would have been impacted. Potato processing plants, dairies, ranches, and dozens of ag related industries would've gone bankrupt. Many of our banks would have gone under. Thousands would have lost their jobs. Restaurants would close. Property values would have plummeted.*

*You would think that no one would ever do that to our region and our economy. Yet, just last month, hundreds of wells were tagged and ordered to be shut down.*

*But then, at the last minute, Governor Little announced that he was going to give the farmers one more chance to come to an agreement that would allow them to keep their farms.*

*Upon hearing that, we all thought that the problem had been resolved. But we have now learned that that is not the case.*

*We have learned that those 500,000 acres of farm ground are still in jeopardy of being closed down.*

*This is a serious situation because the farmers in our region have nothing to negotiate with. They are telling us that the only choice they are being offered is the timing of when they have to shut off their wells and lose their farms. In other words, the only choice they are given is will they agree to lose their farms all at once this fall or will they agree to close down their farms over the next few years.*

*The Governor's Department of Water Resources has told us that the department intends to shut down hundreds of thousands of acres of farm ground in our area.*

*They want to do this in order to raise the level of the aquifer to an artificially high level so that the water will travel downstream underground and then back into the snake River where it can be used by Idaho power to generate electricity.*

*Our water will then continue to flow down to the Boise Valley area where powerful politicians and large corporations believe it is needed to support the phenomenal growth in the Boise area.*

*If you had told me last month that could happen to our region, I would have never believed you. But it is happening.*

*These farmers do not have the political clout to fight the large corporations who have expensive lobbyists. We cannot afford to stand by and watch our farmers fight this battle by themselves.*

*Farmers have long been the backbone of America. They are a great example of the American dream. They demonstrate a culture of hard work, sacrifice, personal responsibility, and family values. We should stand by them. This is the United States of America. And we should be united with the farmers of our community.*

*So, what can you do to help prevent hundreds of thousands of acres of farm ground being permanently shut down?*

*First, become informed. There will be several news stories over the coming weeks debating potential solutions to this extremely serious situation. East Idaho News, channel 8 and other news channels will be carrying these stories.*

*Next, Please reach out to the Governor's office and plead with him to commit to protect our farms from being shut down. The Idaho Constitution gives the Governor and the Legislature the power to stop this. Please reach out to our legislators and ask them to help us get the laws changed to protect our farms.*

*The farmers in our region need our help. Without Eastern Idaho's voice, we will lose hundreds of farms.*

*We must act now before it's too late. I would not have taken your time this evening if it were not extremely urgent.*

*Thank you for everything you do to make Eastern Idaho such a wonderful place to live.*

*The show will begin in one minute.*