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Dear Mr. Ballanti,

This email is in response to your request for comments on the Water Storage Investment Program. I attended the public meeting at the Pleasant Hill Community Center on April 21st and would like to commend you and your staff for making the meeting possible. Ms. Marr did a excellent job of explaining the program overview and the guiding regulations. I found it very helpful. Thank you.

By designing a grant program from the bottom up, you have an opportunity to correct shortcomings that besiege many other grant programs. I encourage you to embrace this opportunity. Most notably, many grant programs are established within a particular agency's "silo of excellence" and are independently designed to meet each agency's particular legislative mandates and program objectives. In order to fund a project, stakeholders must seek out these funding opportunities, attempt to collect funding pieces from disparate sources, and sew together the patchwork quilt of funding to meet their particular project needs.

For projects of a certain medium size, which are proposed by sophisticated and well organized stakeholders, this patchwork quilt funding practice can produce well designed, well funded, integrated, successful projects. However, for very large projects and very small projects, this process can present almost insurmountable challenges. DWR Deputy Director Gary Bardini and his Deputy Mike Mierzwa have given this "project size" issue a great deal of thought. If you have not already done so, I encourage you to seek their council, as I'm confident you will find their thoughtful comments insightful.

The small size projects are likely to be those that serve small rural and often remote and communities. In my work as a federal employee, I had the opportunity to travel to many of these rural communities. What I observed is that these communities often do not have the sophistication to envision an integrated, cross jurisdictional water project. If, perchance, they do envision an integrated water project, they often lack the resources or the long term political will to pull the disparate funding sources together or to quantify the benefits in such a way as to successfully sell their project. If perchance, they do decide to use their meager resources to try to apply for a grant, they are often beat out by more sophisticated urban communities, leaving them even more disillusioned than when they started the process. I am sure that you have heard this from other stakeholders and I am pleased to see that a commitment to provide technical and program assistance to applicants is one of your guiding principles.

I am writing to encourage you of further and to consider these small project challenges as you design your program. I encourage you to ask your staff to do the upfront coordination with other funding agencies and to provide staff with the resources they need to align your program with other likely federal and state funding programs.

A specific example of where this commitment might be applied is through collaboration with the Office of Emergency Services State Hazard Mitigation Office. The State Hazard Mitigation Officer (SHMO) administers the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant program. While many of the grant administration requirements are set by FEMA, the funding priorities are set by the the SHMO. The State Hazard Mitigation Office has done a wonderful job of creating a streamlined NOI process to collect input on potential projects. I encourage your staff to sit down with the SHMO to look at existing projects in their NOI list and to examine ways in which projects likely to be proposed under your program can be aligned with their program. Because the State of

California has an Enhanced State Mitigation Plan, FEMA will provide up to 75% of the project funding. Thus, projects integrated with FEMA funding have the potential for a 3 to 1 return on state dollars. Projects aligned with the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Program are likely to meet the drought relief, emergency response and flood control benefit requirements of your program. While I am most familiar with FEMA programs, I believe similar comments can be made for HUD and EPA funded programs.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment and greatly appreciate your commitment to an open and transparent funding process.

Sincerely,

Kathy S  
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