



November 4, 2015

Sent via ELECTRONIC MAIL to cwc@water.ca.gov

Chairman Joseph Byrne, and Members
California Water Commission
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

Re: Water Bond, Chapter 8 Funding

Dear Chairman Byrne and Members:

Last year the undersigned organizations worked very closely with the Legislature and the Administration to bring about passage of the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (“Water Bond”) and remained highly engaged when the Water Bond was submitted to the public as Proposition 1 in November, 2014. This effort resulted in an overwhelming bipartisan aye vote in the Legislature and a substantial majority of the public voting in support as well. Our commitment remains the same as various entities in state government including the Water Commission begin to implement the Water Bond.

As organizations on the front line of this effort which began years ago, we want to ensure that critical understandings along the way are not lost in the fog of the governmental process that too often engulfs and misapplies statutes and their underlying intent. We are not prepared to state at this time that this is occurring with the Water Commission but we are beginning to see a drift that is of growing concern.

The Water Bond is designed to knit together water infrastructure needs in California that will enhance quality of life through a reliable water supply and protect the public and the environment from damages associated with floods and droughts. For instance, Chapter 8 of the Water Bond provides crucial funding “for the public benefits associated with water storage projects that improve the operation of the state water system, are cost effective, and provide a net improvement in ecosystem and water quality conditions.” (Cal. Water Code § 79750(b).) That means funding

large water storage projects that provide the greatest magnitude of “public benefit” for the entire state.

The reality is that the Water Bond was approved by the Legislature because legislators were assured that Chapter 8 funds would be used to support the “public benefits” associated with large water storage projects, specifically Sites Reservoir and Temperance Flat. That is not to say that other important projects mentioned in Chapter 8 such as groundwater storage, conjunctive use of water, and local and regional surface water storage are not worthy as well. However, we are saying they are more appropriately addressed in other chapters of the Water Bond.

Several of these chapters provide funding for essential projects that restore fish habitat, aquatic systems and wetlands; promote watershed health and restoration; and improve regional self-reliance through reuse and recycling projects, regional surface storage, recharge projects, regional conveyance projects, conjunctive use projects and groundwater storage facilities. (Cal. Water Code §§ 79732, 79737, 79741, 79743.) Beyond funding, however, the success of these projects will rely on significant improvements to California’s water infrastructure which at its core is dependent on large-scale surface water projects.

Sites Reservoir and Temperance Flat are also key for success of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (“SGMA”) which is intended to bring the groundwater basins of California into a sustainable management system by recharging and restoring groundwater basins. Without substantial surface water supplies, communities will continue to be forced to tap into seriously overdrafted groundwater aquifers and continue struggling to bring groundwater basins into balance.

Chapter 8 is the only chapter of the Water Bond that allows for construction of major water storage projects. If the Water Commission attempts to fund other projects through Chapter 8 and thereby dilutes the \$2.7 billion fund to construct Sites Reservoir and Temperance Flat it will have undermined the very projects that will provide supplies of water needed to make these other projects viable.

Our request is that the Water Commission break down government silos by looking beyond the boundaries of Chapter 8, consult with other government agencies also charged with implementing the Water Bond, and coordinate a pathway that allows the Water Bond to achieve its full potential.

Sincerely,



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American Pistachio Growers



Chris Zanobini
California Association of Nurseries and Garden
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Joel Nelson
California Citrus Mutual



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Roger Isom
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