



October 3, 2016

The Honorable Joseph Byrne  
 Chair, California Water Commission  
 1416 Ninth Street  
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Transmit Via Email: [WSIPComments@cw.com](mailto:WSIPComments@cw.com)

**RE: Water Storage Investment Program Draft Regulations**

Dear Chair Byrne:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we welcome the opportunity to provide a few brief comments on the California Water Commission (CWC) Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP) Draft Regulations. RCRC is an association of thirty-five rural California counties and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from those member counties.

RCRC's member counties cover approximately half of California's total 100 million acre land mass and encompass the northern border with Oregon to the southeast border with Mexico, from the Central Valley to the Eastern Sierra, and from the coast to California's wine country. RCRC represents local governments that have land use, public trust and stewardship responsibilities over much of this rich landscape that benefits all of California.

First, RCRC is appreciative of the time and effort from the CWC, CWC staff, the stakeholder advisory committee, various state department and agency staff over the last year on developing the draft regulations. We believe the process has been open, accessible and transparent. RCRC is also grateful for the changes that were made as a result of all the stakeholder comments to the first public draft. This effort is evident in the current draft.

The following comments on the WSIP Draft Regulations address several broad areas of concern to RCRC. The areas of concern that remain are related to project costs and the project review process that would not maximize the expenditure and benefit of the Proposition 1 dollars. RCRC believes the regulations can be implemented in a manner that maximizes the utilization of the taxpayer dollars through Proposition 1, while also achieving the State's policy of coequal goals for management of the Delta.

The application requirements appear to remain overly prescriptive and costly thereby requiring extensive supporting documentation in areas that are not part of the primary evaluation criteria and the mandatory requirement of CALSIM modeling. Additionally, the request for all the

1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, CA 95814 | [www.rcrcnet.org](http://www.rcrcnet.org) | 916.447.4806 | FAX: 916.448.3154

documents related to a project's feasibility seems unwarranted and a better determination of what information will be used in the evaluation process will save both time and resources for the project proponent and CWC staff.

Much of California's agriculture is rooted in the State's rural counties and is a key component of the economy in these areas. The proposed unit water values in Table 5-5 of the Technical Reference appear to be based on agency projections of water transfers resulting from the fallowing of rice. Should rice fallowing be used as the alternative water source to meet the State's water supply needs, then RCRC believes other economic costs need to be taken into account including unemployment, impacts to related industries and the potential loss of county tax revenues. This last point is critical in its implications to county budgets. In addition, fallowing has potential environmental consequences that should be accounted for such as the well-being of habitat and wildlife, and the ramifications to the underlying aquifer and groundwater resources.

In that regard, it is important to note that there are a number of efforts moving forward regarding water including the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). As you know, in 2014, landmark water legislation – Senate Bill 1168 (Pavley) and Assembly Bill 1739 (Dickinson) – were chaptered that established the SGMA which provided a framework for local agencies to develop plans and implement strategies to sustainably manage groundwater resources within a defined period which will require both significant resources and collaboration amongst the stakeholders. The regulations should provide for an integrated effort among successful project proponents and the implementation of SGMA.

In closing, RCRC recognizes the need for additional supply-enhancing projects and the role they play in providing multiple benefits. However, we continue to urge caution in adopting regulations that are so prescriptive they may prove to inhibit the ability of the CWC and potential applicants in the development and approval of projects that will have the flexibility to produce real and measurable public benefits, and help address the long-term water needs for California families, farms, communities, and the environment.

If you should have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 447-4806.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "MaryAnn Warmerdam". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

MARY-ANN WARMERDAM  
Legislative Advocate

cc: Rachel Ballanti, Acting Executive Officer, California Water Commission