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August 9, 2016

Joseph Bryne, Chair  
 California Water Commission  
 P.O. Box 942836  
 Sacramento, California 94236-0001

Re: Time for more water storage

Dear Joseph Bryne, Chair,

As you are acutely aware, California's existing integrated and complex water system was built in the 1960s for a different time, hydrology, and population. Climate is and has been warming. By 2050, conservative estimates are that we'll lose 25 to 40 percent of the Sierra snowpack, the state's largest winter reservoir. The population has more than doubled since the state and federal water projects were constructed. In 1960, there were 15.87 million people in California. Now there are estimates of around 36 million people and projections of over 60 million people by the year 2050. California's population is larger than many nations of the world.

Significant to California is the water stored in reservoirs behind dams. These dams, built decades ago, have dedicated in-stream flow releases designed to meet many beneficial uses of the environment, agriculture, and urban and municipal needs. Let's not forget flood control. As the planet warms, more precipitation will land in the Sierra Nevadas in the form of rain rather than snow. Rain, not absorbed by the forest floor, moves unimpeded through the watershed, breaching dams, causing valley flooding and pressure on the Delta levee system before the water is wasted to the sea. All because California does not have adequate storage facilities to capture excess winter flows.

It has not been since Governor Edmund G. Brown's vision to build a statewide water system for California and President John F. Kennedy's famous speech in 1962 at the site of San Luis Reservoir that the people of this state have been united to build a path for the future. "Water is man's oldest and most precious natural resource," President Kennedy said. "For many years, some believed that the water problems of this state were too controversial and too complicated to solve. They believed there was no escaping the effects of drought and flood." And then it was built. San Luis

Reservoir, when full, holds up to 2 million acre feet or 652-billion gallons of water and is the largest off-stream reservoir in the United States. Construction began in 1963 and was completed in 1967.

Now, half a century later, most Californians are again united. In 2014, California voters overwhelmingly united to support a water bond to support construction of surface water storage.

There are several proposed well-known surface water storage projects being considered; raising Shasta Dam on the Sacramento River, constructing Sites Reservoir and Temperance Flat, and expanding Los Vaqueros and San Luis Reservoirs. However, I bring to your attention several potential water storage projects with regional and statewide public benefits in the Mountain Counties area of the Sierra Nevadas. These regional projects include, Alder Reservoir, Blagen Mill Pond Restoration Project, Centennial Reservoir, Herring Creek Reservoir Expansion, Sierra Pines Reservoir, Sugar Pine Dam Raise, Tuolumne County Water Supply Reliability Project, Upper Strawberry Reservoir, and Wilson Lake Rehabilitation and Meadow Restoration Plan, and other new and expanded forestry restoration projects that will help sequester water in the largest winter reservoir in California; the Sierra Nevadas.

These additional surface water storage projects will help reduce ground water extraction and subsidence in the Delta by using surface water during wet years and the ground water basin during dry years. Additional storage in this region will provide a buffer for new urban and municipal uses, drought preparedness, downstream flood protection, and provide additional cold water for endangered fish. The water released from these reservoirs will help balance the wind and solar electricity grid by generating carbon-free renewable hydropower energy. Please keep in mind, as there is no better opportunity to develop renewable hydropower energy than in the Mountain Counties region.

It is time for more water storage to help pave the way to a prosperous future for California and you have a difficult task ahead of you in the decision making process. You have the will of the people in California. We should reflect again on the words of President Kennedy, "Progress represents the combined will of the American people, and only when they are joined together for action, instead of standing still and thinking that everything that had to be done has been done. It's only when they join together in a forward movement that this country moves ahead and that we prepare the way for those who come after us."

Thank you for your consideration. If I can be of any assistance, please contact me at 530.957.7879.

Sincerely,



John Kingsbury, Executive Director  
Mountain Counties Water Resources Association

c: Rachel Ballenti, Interim Executive Officer  
California Water Commissioners  
Board of Directors, Mountain Counties Water Resources Association

The Honorable:

Assembly Member Frank Bigelow  
California State Capitol, Room 6027  
P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0001

Assembly Member Brian Dahle  
California State Capitol, Room 2158  
P.O. BOX 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0001

Assembly Member Beth Gaines  
California State Capitol, Room 2130  
P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0006

Assembly Member James Gallagher  
California State Capitol, Room 5128  
P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0003

Senator Tom Berryhill  
California State Capitol, Room 3076  
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

Senator Ted Gaines  
California State Capitol, Room 3070  
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

Senator Jim Nielsen  
California State Capitol, Room 2068  
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900