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JOINT OPENING STATEMENT

of the

Water Advisory Committee of Orange County and  
the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority  
Before the State Water Resources Control Board

Resources Building  
Sacramento, California  
June 22, 1992

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The Water Advisory Committee of Orange County ("WACO") and the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority ("SAWPA") have joined together to present testimony in these Interim Proceedings. Their common management and storage link is the Santa Ana River and its basins.

The two agencies represent almost 4,000,000 in Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties.

Evidence packages will be separately prepared and submitted and documentary evidence and oral testimony will be presented through a panel comprised of E. Louis Fletcher, General Manager of San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District; Neil Cline, General Manager of SAWPA; and William R. Mills, Jr., General Manager of the Orange County Water District ("OCWD"). WACO and SAWPA will incorporate by reference exhibits submitted in Phase I of the hearings.

WACO is a consortium of water retailers, intermediary wholesalers, two groundwater management agencies, and two Regional Water Quality Control Boards with jurisdiction in the Santa Ana River Watershed area. The Southern California Water Committee, Inc. and the Orange County Board of Supervisors are members as well. The WACO service area relies on the lower Santa Ana River Basin, Santa Ana River flows, and a blend of water imported into the area by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California ("MWD"), a state water contractor.

SAWPA is a joint powers agency established in accordance with the terms of one of the three adjudications of the Santa Ana River. SAWPA is comprised of one state water contractor (San Bernardino Municipal Water District), a groundwater management agency (OCWD), and three member agencies of MWD.

Each of SAWPA's member agencies and SAWPA plans for, finances, and implements the facilities which are an integral part of the delicately-balanced conjunctive use, wastewater reclamation and water reuse operations in the Santa Ana River system. The efforts are directed at salt and mineral removal in compliance with the requirements of the Regional Boards and of the State and local health agencies.

The evidence WACO and SAWPA will offer in these proceedings through its panel of experts will show that:

1. WACO and SAWPA member agencies already contribute to the protection of the public trust values in the Estuary, and that the activities and programs they have undertaken and financed are well documented and available as models to be followed by others who wish to improve their conservation efforts and maximize efficiency of their reasonable and beneficial use of water;

2. Public trust values to be protected by this Board are located outside of the Estuary and in the Santa Ana River Watershed area. These proceedings seem to focus on the protection of only some uses in a limited area. WACO and SAWPA feel that the Board's focus does not allow proper balancing.

3. Member agencies of both SAWPA and WACO are continuing their planning and implementation of projects and activities which conserve more water and foster more beneficial and non-wasteful uses and continue to do so even in the face of threatened curtailment of State Water Project water.

4. Should the Board determine to implement the measures which are flow-related, SAWPA and WACO member agencies will suffer significant adverse environmental impacts. Accordingly, evidence of those impacts will be submitted as documentary evidence in the form of an environmental checklist.

5. WACO and SAWPA support the non-flow recommendations offered by the State Water Contractors, particularly the suggestions that the Board assist those agencies attempting to increase water reclamation and use of ground water basins conjunctively with surface supplies.

Reclamation, recycling and groundwater storage, if vigorously pursued, can provide an additional reliable water source for agricultural, greenbelts, recreation and industrial use. But it can be done only at great financial expense and exhaustion of human resources.

There are some industries in the SAWPA and WACO service area which have already cut back their water use by 40-50% since the conclusion of Phase I of the Bay-Delta proceedings. Those industries cannot do any more.

Those in the Santa Ana River system have planned, built, and taxed themselves up to \$2,000,000,000 to implement this important state policy of promoting wastewater reclamation, reuse and conjunctive use. To continue to operate effectively, however, the region must be able to operate with a reliable imported supply of State Water Project water.

Higher salt content Colorado River water as a substitute for State Project supplies is not as suitable, and in any event, may not be available in the future.

The system in the Santa Ana River Watershed (as well as the State Water Project itself) was planned for and built for the introduction of low salinity State Water Project supplies into the headwaters of the river system.

An adverse decision on interim measures, and ultimately the water rights decision itself, will not only put in question the wisdom of those who have allocated human and financial resources in the Santa Ana River Watershed area for existing facilities -- such a decision will send a message to others contemplating expensive conjunctive use facilities elsewhere - DO NOT PROCEED.

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