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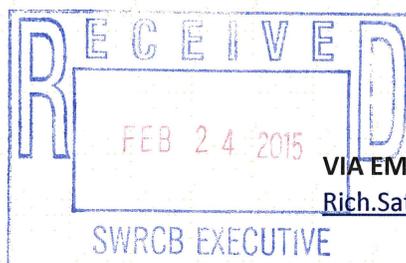
Ed Chavez, Division 3

Michael Touhey, Division 4

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February 17, 2015

State Water Resources Control Board
Members of the Board
c/o Rick Satkowski
1001 "I" Street
Sacramento, CA 95814



VIA EMAIL

Rich.Satkowski@waterboards.ca.gov

RE: *Objections to Order Approving In Part And Denying In Part A Petition For Temporary Urgency Changes To License And Permit Terms And Conditions Requiring Compliance With Delta Water Quality Objectives In Response To Drought Conditions (In the Matter of Specified License and Permits of the Department of Water Resources and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for the State Water Project and Central Valley Project) (herein "Order")*

Dear State Water Resources Control Board Members and Agency Staff:

The Petition requests limited relief from certain requirements of the Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan ("WQCP") to conserve upstream storage (which is important for the protection of multiple beneficial uses, including Chinook salmon spawning), while also providing some level of water supply relief to drought stricken cities and farms. (Order at 2.) To accomplish these objectives, the Petition requested an intermediate level pumping rate of 3,500 cfs when outflows were 5,500 cfs (and certain other requirements were met). The Order included a denial of this request. The denial of the request for a 3,500 cfs intermediate level pumping rate is unjustified.

This letter incorporates by reference the letters from the Metropolitan Water District and State Water Contractors and San Luis Delta Mendota Water Authority dated February 13, 2015.

The Order's partial denial failed to consider highly relevant information regarding the water supply needs of Metropolitan and its member agencies. The Order appears to discount its effects on water supply, stating at p. 19, "...the water supply tradeoffs are not clear given the water contract allocations that will occur this year."

The Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District (Upper District) objects to the Order to the extent it is a partial denial of the Petition For Temporary Urgency Changes To License And Permit Terms And Conditions Requiring Compliance With The Delta Water Quality Objectives In Response To Drought Conditions (February 3, 2015) (herein "Petition").

The economy, environment and health and safety of over 4.9 million residents of the San Gabriel River Watershed depend on a reliable supply of groundwater from the Main San Gabriel Groundwater Basin (Main Basin), Central Basin and West Coast Basin. Los Angeles County has been in “extreme” or “exceptional” drought for all of 2014 and is trending to remain so through 2015. This includes the entire San Gabriel River Watershed.

The Main Basin is one of the largest groundwater basins in southern California, providing residents of the greater San Gabriel Valley with about 240,000 acre-feet per year. The Main Basin is considered a “high priority” basin per SBX7 6 as administered by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring program (CASGEM).

As a fully adjudicated basin, the sustainable management of the Main Basin depends largely on local precipitation in the San Gabriel Mountains (80 percent). Working closely with the Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster (Watermaster), Upper District, Three Valleys Municipal Water District and the San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District are responsible for providing the remaining 20 percent of average supply as groundwater replenishment through Metropolitan’s imported water system and facilities owned and operated by the San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District. The source of the groundwater replenishment is the State Water Project. A very limited amount of Colorado River Water can be spread for replenishment purposes due to Quagga Mussels.

The Main Basin is currently at a record low level and continuing to fall rapidly. The level is currently over 160,000 acre-feet below the low operating range established in the Main San Gabriel Basin Judgment. Metropolitan has had to limit deliveries of State Water Project water to the groundwater basins in its service area all through 2014 in order to maintain surface water storage levels and State Water Project flows for areas that do not have groundwater supplies. This operation cannot be sustained through 2015. Because municipal wells in the Main Basin are threatened and some have gone dry, Upper District declared a water supply emergency in October of 2014.

While water conservation efforts are going well with Basin production levels down more than 10 percent during the peak July – September period, conservation is not enough to fully arrest the rapidly falling Main Basin levels. Overall per capita consumption in the Main Basin area is about 170 gallons per person per day. This includes a significant amount of commercial, manufacturing and food processing activity.

With the lack of local precipitation continuing into a fourth consecutive year, the only option to protect municipal wells from losing production or running dry, is to replenish the Main Basin with significant quantities of water from the State Water Project. Over 1.3 million people in the San Gabriel Valley depend on a sustainable supply of groundwater. The Order runs completely counter to their interests and seriously and irreparably damages their long-term water supply future. Further, the Order does not consider in any way the provisions of the recently adopted Sustainable Groundwater Management Act or recognize that the Main Basin is a high priority basin per SBX7 6 and DWR’s CASGEM program.

Groundwater pumped from the Central Basin, also in Los Angeles County and dependent on local precipitation from the San Gabriel River Watershed, supports a population of over 4 million. The Central Basin is in a similar as the Main Basin. Many of the communities that depend on a sustainable groundwater supply from both the Main Basin and Central Basin are disadvantaged communities. They have no direct access to treated water from the Colorado River through the imported water system and are entirely dependent on groundwater. Production from the Central Basin is being sustained in part by replenishment of highly treated, pure recycled water. This operation requires that blends with other sources of water (natural recharge from local precipitation and imported water) be maintained. With the continued lack of local precipitation, the only source of blending water for continued recycled water replenishment operations is water from the State Water Project.

The Order did not sufficiently balance the significant consumptive water supply needs with the needs of the fishery. As explained above, as well as in the joint SLDMWA-SWC letter and Metropolitan's letter, the proposed intermediate level of project pumping is very important to cities and farms. This level of pumping can be provided without injury to Delta species, consistent with the determinations of the state and federal fishery agencies, Bureau of Reclamation, and the Department of Water Resources. Therefore, the Water Board should reconsider the Executive Officer's decision to partially deny the Petition.

I hope this letter helps clarify the water supply tradeoffs of the Order as it stands.

Sincerely,



Michael R. Touhey
President

cc: Senator Tony Mendoza, 32nd District
Senator Dr. Ed Hernandez, 22nd District
Senator Kevin De León, 24th District
Senator Ricardo Lara, 33rd District