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Assembly
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ASSEMBLYMEMBER, TWENTY-SEVENTH DISTRICT

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HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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TRANSPORTATION
WATER, PARKS AND WILDLIFE

December 9, 2021

Teresa Alvarado
Chair, California Water Commission and Commissioners
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, California 94236-0001

RE: Water Storage Investment Program: Support for Continued Eligibility and Feasibility Determination of the Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project

Dear Chair Alvarado and Commissioners:

I write in support of the Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project (Pacheco Project) and urge the California Water Commission (Commission) to make the appropriate finding for eligibility and feasibility as required by Water Code Section 79757 established by Proposition 1. The Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water) and its agency partners, the Pacheco Pass Water District and the San Benito County Water District, have worked diligently over the last three years to ensure the requirements for the January 1, 2022, deadline is met. The Pacheco Project delivers critical emergency water supply and environmental benefits to Santa Clara, San Benito, Monterey, and Santa Cruz counties. It also provides incidental flood protection benefits for disadvantaged communities along the Pajaro River.

Proposition 1, The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Act of 2014, was approved by the voters of California based on the promise of improved water security and environmental stewardship through strategic investment in projects and programs that deliver public benefits. The Pacheco Project was previously determined to meet the stringent requirements of the Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP) by the Commission as the highest scoring project, and as such, was awarded conditional eligibility for $496 million, which includes a subsequent 2.5 percent adjustment for inflation.

The expanded Pacheco Reservoir, supplied by natural inflows and federal Central Valley Project water from nearby San Luis Reservoir, would be operated to provide a host of environmental, water supply, and societal benefits. Among the most notable benefits are emergency water supplies for Silicon Valley, a region of 2 million people that is a cornerstone of the state and national economies. By modifying Pacheco Creek

from an ephemeral stream to a creek that flows throughout the year, the Project will provide critical environmental benefits like establishing high-quality habitat for the threatened South-Central California Coast steelhead.

Additionally, the expanded Pacheco Reservoir will enable participating agencies to import Central Valley Project (CVP) water supplies at times most supportive for Delta fish species and store that water for future use. The increased storage also will help address unmet water demand for South-of-Delta wetland wildlife refuges through dedication of a portion of Valley Water's CVP supply to the Grasslands Water District. This 2,000-acre-foot designation will provide water supplies necessary for optimal management of refuges and supporting birds migrating along the Pacific Flyway.

Another key public benefit of the Pacheco Project is increased flood protection for downstream, disadvantaged communities. These communities experienced flooding in 2017 that would have been prevented had the Pacheco Project been in place. In addition, this project will solve raw water quality issues impacting Santa Clara and San Benito counties by addressing the San Luis Low Point problem. In the event algae blooms occur in San Luis Reservoir due to elevated temperature combined with declining water levels, local water agencies can shift to the improved and interconnected Pacheco Reservoir to avoid costly treatment.

As we know, California is experiencing devastating impacts due to climate change, from unprecedented wildfires, rising sea levels, and a reduced and sometimes non-existent Sierra snowpack. Increased water storage is a critical adaptation of our water system from one dependent on snowpack to one that is based on precipitation from large rain events. The Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project delivers a new storage facility to allow conveyance of water from where is falls to where it is stored for optimal human and environmental uses.

The Pacheco Project improves the regional water supply, while also reducing flood risk for disadvantaged communities, supporting sustainable groundwater recharge, and expanding habitat for wildlife. I urge the Commission to continue your full support of the Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project and make the appropriate finding for continued eligibility and feasibility.

Sincerely,

ASH KALRA