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May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

California Water Commission  
715 P Street  
Sacramento, CA, 95814

## Save Mount Diablo Comment Letter in Opposition of Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project

Dear Commissioners,

Save Mount Diablo (SMD) is a nationally accredited land trust founded in 1971 with a mission to preserve Mount Diablo's peaks, surrounding foothills, watersheds, and its sustaining Diablo Range. We accomplish this through land conservation and management strategies designed to protect the mountain's natural beauty, biological diversity, and historic and agricultural heritage; enhance our area's quality of life; and provide educational and recreational opportunities consistent with protection of natural resources.

We acquire land, or interests in land, for conservation purposes and often for addition to parks on and around Mount Diablo. We are involved in land use planning, policy and advocacy which might affect protected lands. We build trails, restore habitat, and are conduct environmental education. In 1971, there was just one park on Mount Diablo totaling 6,778 acres; today there are almost 50 parks and preserves around Mount Diablo totaling 120,000 acres. We include more than 11,000 donors and supporters.

We are writing to voice our strong opposition to the proposed Pacheco Reservoir project due to its skyrocketing costs, its lack of public benefits, and its negative impacts on important wildlife habitat in the Diablo Range.

The current Pacheco Reservoir is a small, 6,150-acre-feet waterbody being proposed to undergo a giant expansion to hold 140,000 acre-feet. This project would cause massive wildlife blockage in the Pacheco Pass area, one of the most important wildlife corridors and ecologically biodiverse areas in the Diablo Range.

150 acres of protected land on The Nature Conservancy's Romero Ranch Conservation Easement Area, as well as a portion of Henry W. Coe State Park, would be permanently drowned by the project. If such lands that are already considered 'permanently protected' can be drowned and destroyed, then what does 'protected' land even mean?

A much larger area of sensitive wildlife habitat will suffer negative impacts from the project. Nearly 1,800 acres of upland habitat and two breeding ponds for federally protected California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog would be negatively affected by the project.

Other important wildlife like tule elk, bald and golden eagles, and bobcats, would have more than 1,000 acres of their habitat negatively impacted by the expansion of Pacheco Reservoir.

While these ecological impacts are already bad, the financial impacts of the project pose an entirely different issue. The projected price of the project has doubled in recent years to \$2.2 billion. As costs continue to skyrocket, there is no end in sight of how much this disastrous proposal could cost. This burden will fall on Santa Clara County ratepayers who will get only meager benefits from the project, if any at all. Other reservoir proposals in the area have already made the Pacheco Reservoir Expansion redundant.

For all these reasons and more, we urge the Commission to say no to Pacheco Dam.

Regards,

Steven dePaschalis  
Land Use Advocate



*North Fork of Pacheco Creek at the proposed inundation site. Photo: Scott Hien*





*A bald eagle sitting next to its nest in the proposed inundation site. Photo: Scott Hein*



*Views from the top of the Lawler Ranch, revealing the canyons proposed for flooding. Photo: Scott Hein*





*Current Pacheco Reservoir. Photo: Scott Hein*



*Pacheco Creek in the upper part area of the Lawler Ranch. Photo: Scott Hein*





*The Diablo Range as viewed from the Lawler Ranch, proposed inundation site. Photo: Scott Hein*