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**A JOINT COMMISSION APPOINTED BY:**  
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August 18, 2016

Jose Ramirez, Project Manager  
Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District  
10060 Goethe Road  
Sacramento, CA 95827

Subject: Sacramento Environmental Commission (SEC) Comments on the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District South Sacramento County Agriculture & Habitat Lands Recycled Water Program Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) SCH#: 2015022067

Dear Mr. Ramirez,

The purpose of this correspondence is for the Sacramento Environmental Commission (SEC) to provide comments on the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District South Sacramento County Agriculture & Habitat Lands Recycled Water Program Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) SCH#: 2015022067. The SEC is a joint County/City appointed commission chartered in part, to recommend to County Departments upon request, measures which will promote environmental health. The Draft EIR presented for comment is one such request. We appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on the South Sacramento County Agriculture & Habitat Lands Recycled Water Program Draft EIR.

## **Background**

The SEC supports your efforts to reduce treated wastewater discharges to surface waterways and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and to increase wastewater recycling for beneficial use by local agricultural users and environmental resources. We recognize that this program could establish a precedent for future similar projects that may be proposed by SRCSD or other entities.

The SEC reviewed and discussed the contents of the Draft EIR at our August 15, 2016 public meeting and developed the following comments for your consideration.

We understand that components of the proposed project are yet to be defined and can only be addressed at a program level at this time. However, the components that are being addressed at a project-level of detail need to have a complete impact analysis and mitigation identified where appropriate.

### **Biological Resources**

We noted that the presence of biological resources found at the proposed new pump station and along the 250 foot-wide recycled water transmission pipeline area of potential effect (APE), has not been determined. There is no information explaining the location or area of habitat and associated species that are present in the APE. Therefore, while an impact to biological resources is identified as potentially significant, there is no discussion of the severity or magnitude of the potential impact to sensitive biological resources that may occur with project implementation.

Because the Draft EIR does not characterize the potential impacts to these biological resources, Mitigation Measures BIO-1a and BIO-1b are not sufficiently defined to determine if they are adequate to mitigate impacts to affected habitat and species. The Draft EIR has deferred the definition of these mitigation measures to a future date. Specifically, on page 3.5-31, the Draft EIR limits the implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1a to feasible efforts, while Mitigation Measure BIO-1b relies on unknown actions that may be required as part of future regulatory permit.

It is not known whether these measures will fully mitigate potential impacts, and therefore, cannot be relied upon as mitigation to conclude that a less-than-significant impact can be attained. At a minimum, it is recommended that mitigation performance standards be defined to determine the measures' effectiveness to mitigate impacts.

### **Hydrology and Water Quality**

Our second comment is on the discussion of Hydrology and Water Quality impacts starting on page 3.10-24 of the Draft EIR. We noted that interference or changes to Central Valley Project (CVP and State Water Project (SWP) operations is identified as an impact threshold. Because of this impact threshold, Mitigation Measure HYD-4 is identified to avoid potential conflict and a significant effects.

The SEC concludes that this threshold is not appropriate because: 1) ongoing operations of the CVP and SWP are not environmental topics as defined by § 21060.5 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and 2) the SRCSD is not obligated to continue treated wastewater discharges even if it were to jeopardize ongoing CVP and SWP operations.

If an cumulative environmental impact occurs as a result of continued CVP and SWP operations combined with the proposed reduced treated wastewater discharges, including impacts to water quality, aquatic species habitat, or conflicts with an applicable water quality control plan, it would be incumbent on the CVP and SWP to modify their operations accordingly, consistent with State Water Resources Control Board Decision 1485 and other requirements.

Therefore, Mitigation Measure HYD-4 may not be appropriate as a mandatory measure required to mitigate the identified conflict. In addition, this measure may set a precedence for future recycled water projects that reduce treated wastewater discharge to the Sacramento-San Joaquin River system.

However, if the SRCSD objective or policy is to avoid potential conflict with ongoing CVP and SWP operations, the SEC advises that the limits identified by Mitigation Measure HYD-4 could be achieved as a voluntary commitment and incorporated into the project description. Such a voluntary commitment would avoid establishing a precedent that may be imposed on future similar recycled water projects.

The SEC appreciates the opportunity to submit these comments on the SRCSD South Sacramento County Agriculture & Habitat Lands Recycled Water Program Draft EIR. If you have any questions regarding these comments, please feel free to contact SEC Secretary Jill Koehn at (916) 875-8584.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard Hunn".

Richard Hunn, Chair  
Sacramento Environmental Commission