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MICHAEL R. MARKUS, P.E., D.WRE

ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT
 ORANGE COUNTY'S GROUNDWATER AUTHORITY

July 14, 2015

The Honorable David Valadao
 1004 Longworth House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

RE: H.R. 2898 the Western Water and American Food Security Act of 2015

Dear Congressman Valadao:

I am writing on behalf of the Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) and the cities and water retailers it serves. We are pleased to provide our comments in support of congressional efforts to provide emergency drought relief assistance and specifically H.R. 2898.

The Orange County Water District manages the Orange County Groundwater Basin, which provides 70 percent of the water supply to 2.4 million people in north and central Orange County, California. OCWD is encouraged by H.R. 2898's focus on expediting federal permitting processes and facilitating the operational flexibility of the federal and state water projects and dams to allow for enhanced water supply while protecting our natural resources. We believe that our extensive working knowledge and experience in water management and sustainability, especially during times of drought, demonstrate the benefits of a multi-pronged approach to water reliability.

More than two decades ago, OCWD committed to finding sustainable water supplies for our region. This priority focused on ways to replace the groundwater that is pumped out of our water basin annually. OCWD implemented an internationally recognized sustainable water supply project known as the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS). The GWRS is the largest indirect potable reuse project in the world. Operational since January 2008 and with an initial expansion completed in June 2015, this state-of-the-art water purification project can produce up to 100 million gallons of high-quality water every day. This is enough water to meet the needs of nearly 850,000 people in north and central Orange County, California. GWRS water is used to prevent seawater intrusion of the groundwater basin as well as to recharge the groundwater basin for pumping by the 19 cities and water retailers in OCWD's service area.

The GWRS project was realized, in part, through a partnership with the federal government, specifically the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. OCWD believes a well-funded federal water recycling and desalination program to assist local agencies develop and operate sustainable water supply projects can return multiple benefits to municipalities, agriculture and the general environment by offsetting demands on scarce potable supplies.

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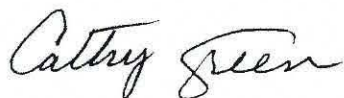
OCWD supports the provisions in H.R. 2898 that provide flexibility to capture water at federal dams during storm events. OCWD, in collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), now has the opportunity to provide an additional 30,000 acre-feet of water annually (enough water for about 250,000 people) by temporarily capturing additional stormwater at Prado Dam. Prado Dam, located on the Santa Ana River, while primarily used for flood prevention, has captured temporary stormwater for subsequent recharge of the Orange County Groundwater Basin for the past 25 years.

OCWD and our producers also support provisions of H.R. 2898 authorizing increased pumping to -7,500 cfs to capture high peaks of precipitation, which would also increase water supply to our region.

As you and your colleagues consider amending H.R. 2898 in the coming weeks, we request that you provide federal grant support for desalination and water recycling projects in addition to the legislation's existing support for water storage facilities. For your consideration, we additionally recommend that H.R. 2898 include provisions for local water districts, such as OCWD, to work with the Corps and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to improve the capture of stormwater at local dams. The capture of stormwater could be maximized through modernizing weather and runoff forecasting, and by the Corps modifying its operation manuals to account for the latest weather and runoff forecasting capabilities.

Again, we appreciate your leadership to advance a comprehensive response to the drought emergency. As the legislation proceeds through Congress, we look forward to working with you. Please do not hesitate to contact Alicia Dunkin, Legislative Affairs Liaison, at adunkin@ocwd.com or (714) 378-8232 if you have any questions or if we may be of assistance to you or your staff.

Sincerely,



Cathy Green
President
Orange County Water District



Michael Moore
Acting Assistant General Manager
City of Anaheim



Lisa Ohlund
General Manager
East Orange County Water District



David Schickling
Water Systems Manager
City of Fullerton

Bao Nguyen



Bao Nguyen
Mayor
City of Garden Grove

Ken Vecchiarelli



Golden State
Water Company
A Subsidiary of American States Water Company

Ken Vecchiarelli
General Manager
Golden State Water Company

Paul Shoenberger



Paul Shoenberger
General Manager
Mesa Water District

Jerry Vilander



Jerry Vilander
General Manager
Serrano Water District

Scott Miller



Scott Miller
Water Superintendent
City of Westminster

Marc Marcantonio



Marc Marcantonio
General Manager
Yorba Linda Water District

cc: Congressman Darrell Issa
Congressman Alan Lowenthal
Congressman Dana Rohrabacher
Congressman Ed Royce
Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez
Congresswoman Mimi Walters