



500 S. Main Street, #410, Orange, CA 92868 | P: 714.953.1300 | F: 714.953.1302 | www.ACCOC.org

March 25, 2014

Honorable Ricardo Lara
State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 94249

RE: SB 355 (Lara) Rivers and Mountains Conservancy Board – OPPOSE

Dear Senator Lara,

The Association of California Cities – Orange County (ACC-OC) opposes SB 355 (Lara), a bill that would strip Orange County of half of its voting representation on the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) Board. Unfortunately, neither the bill nor its supporting materials adequately explain the need for such drastic action.

Importance of the RMC to Southern California & Orange County

The RMC is a critical pathway to regional collaboration on environmental and water quality issues. Ensuring broad representation on the RMC is an effective strategy to developing the programs and procuring the funds, through Proposition 1 or other vehicles, to achieve regional environmental objectives. Specifically, Proposition 1 includes approximately \$30 million in direct allocation for watershed improvements and a share of \$100 million for urban creek restoration that will be allocated through the RMC. These funds will work towards improving all of Southern California, not just one county.

The RMC is also of vital importance to Orange County. In fact, its territory includes the watersheds for portions of the lower Santa Ana River. The Santa Ana River is primarily responsible for the replenishing of Orange County's groundwater basin, which in turn provides 75 percent of water needs for residents and businesses in a majority of Orange County's cities. Moreover, the RMC encompasses roughly one-quarter of the County (the State's third largest) and includes all of Anaheim – the State's tenth largest city.

Request of Intent

Therefore, we request a detailed explanation as to the author's intent. SB 355 would unequivocally marginalize the voice of Orange County, which currently holds just two of thirteen voting seats on the RMC, just as critical and competitive funding programs begin to take shape. It would be unfortunate if the bill's consequence – unintended or otherwise – is to isolate a regional partner at the expense of the environment.



ACC-OC remains committed to legislation that advocates fair and proportionate representation on countywide and regional boards. For this and the reasons described above, the Association of California Cities – Orange County (ACC-OC) respectfully opposes SB 355.

Please contact Diana Coronado in our office with any questions you may have about our position on this issue or about the ACC-OC.

Sincerely,



Lacy Kelly
CEO
Association of California Cities – Orange County

cc:

ACC-OC Board of Directors
Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee
Senate Appropriations Committee
Senator Bob Huff
Senator Tony Mendoza
Senator Janet Nguyen
Assemblymember Travis Allen
Assemblymember Ling Ling Chang
Assemblymember Tom Daly
Assemblymember Young Kim
Assemblymember Don Wagner
Councilman Troy Edgar, City of Los Alamitos
City of Anaheim, City Council
City of Brea, City Council
City of Buena Park, City Council
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