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ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT
ORANGE COUNTY'S GROUNDWATER AUTHORITY

June 2, 2021

Sheri Looper
Bureau of Reclamation
slooper@usbr.gov

Dear Ms. Looper:

The Orange Water County Water District (OCWD) writes to submit comments regarding the *Draft Eligibility and Evaluation Criteria for WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects, Drought Resiliency Projects, and Water and Energy Efficiency Grants* that was issued in May 2021.

OCWD operates the world's largest water recycling plant and manages a groundwater basin that provides water to 2.5 million people in Orange County, California. OCWD's comments are based upon decades of work in implementing projects that are drought resilient, address water challenges and enhance local supplies. We believe that any revisions to the evaluation criteria should include the following:

- Each of the three categories should have the same 50% match;
- No one category receives all or a majority of the funding;
- Prioritizes projects that provide the greatest new water supply benefits to the greatest number of people; and
- The funding criteria comports with the statutory intent of WaterSMART and is not unduly influenced by other policy priorities.

The WaterSmart Program as authorized by the SECURE Act has proven successful in helping municipal, agriculture and environmental stakeholders make necessary investments to combat challenges to water supply. Maintaining an equal distribution of resources will aid in the continued success of this popular and successful program.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Please do not hesitate to contact OCWD General Manager Michael Markus at mmarkus@ocwd.com or (714) 378-3305 if you have any questions and/or if we may be of future assistance on water issues.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Sheldon
Board President

