

DRAFT

April 12, 2016

The Honorable Luis Alejo
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 2117
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1585 (Alejo) Monterey County Water Resources Agency: Lake Nacimiento and Lake San Antonio- SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Alejo:

On behalf of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, I write to support your Assembly Bill 1585, which would appropriate \$25,000,000 to the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) for the purpose of constructing a water conveyance tunnel (Interlake Tunnel) between Lake Nacimiento and Lake San Antonio and spillway modifications at Lake San Antonio.

California's recent drought has severely impacted farming communities throughout the state, specifically the agricultural communities in Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties – one of the most productive farming regions in the world. Monterey County is one of the nation's top agricultural producers and is the County's largest sector in terms of economic output and employment. As such, it represents a vital link to both the County's cultural past and competitive future. A recent report "*Economic Contributions of Monterey County Agriculture*" showed that agriculture contributed \$8.1 billion and more than 76,000 jobs to the Monterey County economy in 2014.

The proposed Interlake Tunnel and San Antonio Spillway Modification Project (Project) will connect Nacimiento and San Antonio reservoirs to effectively increase the use of existing storage capacity in the system to increase water quantity for drought protection, and seawater intrusion abatement, as well as stabilize releases, providing additional flood control for the surrounding farming communities.

The Nacimiento reservoir is located in a watershed that can receive significantly more rainfall than the San Antonio reservoir watershed. The water spilled from the reservoir in wetter years can cause flooding and stress on wildlife and habitat within the Nacimiento and Salinas Rivers, as well as loss of critical agricultural lands in the Salinas Valley. Much of the flood damage caused by the El Niño events of 1995 and 1998 were in the most economically disadvantaged parts of the Salinas Valley.

Over the years, tens of thousands of acre feet of water were released prematurely, due to imposed regulatory limits, ultimately flowing into the ocean instead of being stored and utilized for future environmental releases for fish flows and other beneficial uses. The Project will provide an innovative

solution to the problem utilizing existing storage infrastructure by designing and constructing an 12,000 foot tunnel between the Nacimiento and San Antonio reservoirs to transfer water and thereby increase the opportunity to store up to 60,000 acre-feet of additional water per year when available. The water from these two reservoirs would then be used downstream for groundwater recharge, sea water intrusion abatement, and the promotion of fish habitats - increasing the total available supply and quality of water benefits the surrounding communities and ecosystems.

The health of the Salinas Valley ecosystem is vital to the surrounding communities that depend on its natural resources. In addition to negatively impacting the agricultural communities, California's drought is harming the wildlife and their habitat. This Project provides a workable solution for agricultural production and resource management challenges, as it helps increase water quantity and improves water quality for all users of the Salinas Valley system. The Project will allow for a stable, constant release of water through the Nacimiento and Salinas Rivers that will help improve the health of the wildlife throughout the ecosystem and improve flood control. In addition, the Project will help reduce the need to pump groundwater – allowing the groundwater basin to recharge, which helps reduce seawater intrusion, and improves water quality.

The Monterey County Water Resources Agency is the lead agency for the project. The Agency has also received support for the Project from the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California, Monterey County Farm Bureau, Salinas River Channel Coalition, Salinas Valley Water Coalition and many Monterey County farm and civic organizations.

Thank you for authoring AB 1585.

Sincerely,

Jane Parker
Chair, Board of Supervisors

Cc: Senator Bill Monning
Senator Anthony Cannella
Assembly Member Mark Stone
Monterey County Board of Supervisors
Lew C. Bauman, County Administrative Officer, Monterey County
Nicholas E. Chiulos, Assistant County Administrative Officer, Monterey County
Charles McKee, County Counsel, Monterey County
Clerk of the Board, Monterey County
Water Resources Agency Board of Directors
David Chardavoyne, General Manager, Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Robert Johnson, Deputy General Manager, Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Brent R. Heberlee, Nossaman LLP
John E. Arriaga, JEA & Associates