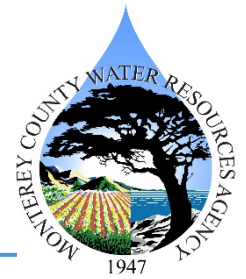


Monterey County Water Resources Agency



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DATE

Caroline Chapin, Chair
Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Board of Directors
P.O. Box 1350
Carmel Valley, CA 93924

Sent via email to: board@svbgsa.org

SUBJECT: Portfolio Selection – Bringing Focus to the Next Leg of the Journey

Dear Chair Chapin and Members of the Board:

The Monterey County Water Resources Agency (Agency) appreciates its collaboration with the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA), by providing important services, data, and operational expertise to the SVBGSA-led planning effort to achieve groundwater sustainability in the Salinas Valley. Groundwater is the lifeblood of Monterey County's communities, economies, and culture, and sustaining it effectively and affordably for future generations must be a shared priority, as the consequences of failure will surely affect us all.

Since its formation, the SVBGSA has accomplished much, and you, its Directors, sit today now weighing an important decision, but one that is just the beginning of a journey, certainly not the end. Over the past 4 years, the Agency has dedicated significant staff time and expertise towards informing, reviewing, and developing six feasibility studies that now compose the portfolios before the Board. During this work, a wide range of water supplies, availability, conveyance, treatment, storage, distribution, and cost scenarios have been developed and considered by the Advisory Committee, leading in the end to a recommendation to further evaluate portfolios 3A and 4, with considerations. Given the depth and breadth of the Agency's engagement, we want to express our support for the Advisory Committee's recommendation, but further encourage the Board to narrow the focus to Portfolio 3A as the foundation for the SVBGSA's future analysis and potential development.

The decision made by the Board at their August meeting is not final, not even close. Following this decision, the selected portfolio will need to be further developed and refined to ensure that it is feasible and meets the intended goals. Additionally, it will be subject to continuing public comment

The Water Resources Agency manages water resources sustainably,
while minimizing impacts from flooding, for present and future generations.



prior to submission to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) in January 2027, followed by review and response from DWR, many future decisions by the SVBGSA committees and Board regarding potential portfolio development, including annual funding to support it, alternative project ideas, deepening public, state, and federal scrutiny as a potential portfolio moves through development into the environmental review processes, state and federal endangered species act compliance, state and federal water quality act compliance, potential litigation, and finally, the ultimate arbiter, a public vote upon how to fund a final proposal.

What the August vote does provide is much needed direction and focus. The past few years of intense effort developing the feasibility studies and proposed portfolios clearly demonstrate the human and financial resources necessary to advance a proposed solution. This need will not lessen in the coming years; however, clear direction and deliberate intent can ensure that the resources dedicated are applied responsibly and efficaciously. The Agency's inclination to advance Portfolio 3A for further SVBGSA consideration, in part, reflects our understanding that Portfolio 1 is considered impractical and Portfolio 4 ineffective for addressing seawater intrusion, which is a key DWR barometric. For these reasons, we encourage the Board to focus our precious financial and human resources to advance Portfolio 3A, as a likelihood of success should also be an important criterion. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Ara Azhderian
General Manager