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Subject: FW: Request for Electronic Distribution of Public Comment to Leadership Committee
Date: Wednesday, July 16, 2025 4:42:00 PM
Attachments: [20250715 - General Public Comment for the MCWRA Joint Supervisor Director Leadership meeting.pdf](#)

Good afternoon, JBL Committee members/ MCWRA Board of Directors,

I hope this email finds you well, please see public comment received.

Thank you & have a great rest of your day,



Eva Gonzales, Senior Secretary – Confidential
Monterey County Water Resources Agency
1441 Schilling Place, North Building, Salinas, CA 93901
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From: Bill Lipe <william.o.lipe@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 16, 2025 4:27 PM
To: ClerkoftheBoard <cob@countyofmonterey.gov>; MC Water <OfficeAssistantII@countyofmonterey.gov>
Cc: Azhderian, Ara <AzhderianA@countyofmonterey.gov>; 100-District 5 (831) 647-7755 <District5@countyofmonterey.gov>
Subject: Request for Electronic Distribution of Public Comment to Leadership Committee

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Dear Clerk of the Boards,

I respectfully request that the attached public comment letter, submitted in connection with the July 17, 2025 Joint Leadership Committee Meeting of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors and the MCWRA Board of Directors, be electronically distributed to all members of the Committee.

While the agenda indicates that public comments were due by July 12, I note that the video and transcript of the July 9 workshop were not made publicly accessible until July 16. My comment reflects observations and analysis based directly on those materials and is intended to help inform the Committee's understanding of what transpired at that meeting.

Thank you for your attention to this request and for ensuring that this correspondence is made available to the full Leadership Committee.

Sincerely,

Bill Lipe
Resident in the 180/400, 93908
Monterey County

General Public Comment Letter

Submitted by: Bill Lipe

Resident in the 180/400 subbasin, Monterey County

Date: July 17, 2025

To the Members of the Joint Water Resources/Board of Supervisors Leadership Committee:

Before addressing the substance of this comment, I would like to acknowledge a procedural concern. According to the meeting agenda, public comments were due by 5:00 PM on Friday, July 12, 2025. However, the transcript and video from the July 9, 2025 public workshop were not made publicly accessible until the morning of July 16. I want to thank the MCWRA staff for making these materials available. Given the timing, I respectfully ask that this comment be distributed electronically to all members of the Leadership Committee, as it contains firsthand observations of a discussion many of you were not present for.

The HBA 2025 Is Not an Update—It's a Redirection

It was made clear in the July 9 meeting that the current Historic Benefits Assessment does not build on the 1998 version, but rather replaces it—without addressing or acknowledging some of the most critical hydrologic evidence. The 1998 HBA quantified major impacts: over 230,000 acre-feet of seawater intrusion, dozens of wells lost, and a measurable inland advance of saltwater. These facts do not appear in the new report, and no explanation was provided as to why such foundational data was excluded.

To underscore the importance of this point, the 1998 HBA clearly stated that, without the reservoirs, seawater intrusion would have been significantly worse. Specifically, it found that the absence of the reservoirs would have led to an *additional* 230,000 acre-feet of seawater intrusion between 1958 and 1994—raising the average rate by 7,000 acre-feet per year. That would have pushed the seawater intrusion front 6.5 miles inland, impacting nearly 5,000 more acres in the 180-foot aquifer and 1,200 more acres in the 400-foot aquifer, and necessitating the replacement of approximately 41 additional wells. That scale of benefit deserves full consideration.

This is not a minor oversight. Removing previously established data without technically disproving it eliminates the historical context necessary for understanding the full scope of benefits delivered by past water management infrastructure. That makes it harder to fairly assess benefit, investment, and responsibility.

Acknowledging the Limitations of the Seawater Intrusion Model

It was acknowledged during the workshop that the model used in the 2025 HBA cannot directly simulate seawater intrusion—and that it was widely regarded as inadequate for that purpose. Despite this, the model is being used to evaluate projects whose primary purpose was, and remains, the control of seawater intrusion.

Better, calibrated seawater intrusion models already exist and are in use locally, including by public agencies. Choosing not to employ them raises concern about the validity of the HBA's conclusions, particularly those related to benefit distribution and historical project effectiveness.

Interconnected Projects Cannot Be Parsed Apart

Comments from the workshop underscored that projects like CSIP function only through their connection to the broader water delivery and storage system. The ability to deliver surface water to the coast depends on diversions at the rubber dam, which in turn depend on releases from the upstream reservoirs.

CSIP did not, and could not, operate in isolation. Its success relies on the conjunctive use of surface and groundwater supplies—a chain that includes the reservoirs, Salinas River, rubber dam, and delivery infrastructure. Fragmenting these elements for the sake of narrow financial or legal arguments ignores how water actually moves and how the system was engineered to function. Remove any link, and the benefit disappears.

Valley-Wide Investment Already Happened—Twice

Over the last several decades, the broader valley has invested significantly in shared water infrastructure. The construction of the reservoirs and, later, the CSIP and SRDF systems were region-wide undertakings. These efforts were funded with valley-wide participation, yet their most direct benefits have been to coastal lands reliant on surface water delivery to curb aquifer overdraft and seawater intrusion.

And still, the problem remains. That suggests that past investments were necessary, but not sufficient—and that future solutions will require meaningful engagement and leadership from those drawing directly from the overdrafted aquifers.

Observations from a Local Perspective

As someone who lives and works in this valley, I believe the conversation must stay grounded in hydrologic fact and long-term regional equity. It was apparent at the workshop that some speakers aimed to minimize or compartmentalize benefits in ways that would reduce their future cost obligations. But that doesn't reflect how the infrastructure works—or how we got here.

The 2025 HBA should be evaluated with those realities in mind. Whatever the legal and financial considerations, the physical system demands recognition of its interdependence, and of the valley-wide investments already made.

Thank you for your attention and your commitment to thoughtful water governance.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Lipe

Resident in the 180/400 subbasin

93908

Monterey County