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February 5, 2014

The Honorable Anthony Cannella
State Capitol, Room 3048,
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

The Honorable Andy Vidak
State Capitol, Room 3082,
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

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- Twain Harte Community Services District
- Utica Power Authority

Re: SB 927

Dear Senators Cannella and Vidak:

On behalf of the Mountain Counties Water Resources Association (MCWRA), I appreciate your efforts to streamline the existing water bond to provide funding to increase storage, provide clean drinking water and a Delta solution. While the State’s focus is on ecological restoration and conveyance through the Delta, the State must acknowledge that the “source” of the water for the Delta is not the Delta, but the snowpack in the Sierra Nevada. The Sierra Nevada is an essential element that needs investment to increase water supply and improve water quality if California is to achieve and sustain the State’s co-equal goals in and through the State’s water conveyance hub; the Delta.

SB 927 removes the authorization for funds from the “source water” for ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration projects in the Delta headwaters. The Delta watershed must be an integral part to any comprehensive statewide package. Water quantity and water quality starts at the crest or headwaters of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in each watershed. Ignoring this critical element in a water bond is shortsighted if California’s statewide water system is to be sustainable.

Equally important to the ecosystem and sustainability of the Delta, is the ecosystem and sustainability of the Sierra Nevada headwaters. Without a reliable water source starting at the crest of the Sierra, the Delta will not be sustainable. A statewide solution must be balanced and include the headwaters in the “Delta Watershed”.

Major wildland fires in the Sierra Nevada will cause significant water supply and water quality consequences for Delta inflows that also affect the survival rates of threatened and endangered aquatic species. Wildfires can decimate the landscape. The soil changes to sediment, which reduces the storage capacity of California’s reservoirs,

reduces the cold water pool for the fish, accelerates run-off, and increases flooding only to put further pressure on the State's levee system.

As the majority of the Sierra is National Forest Lands, it is also essential that the State work with federal land managers to enhance water storage options in anticipation of climate change and extended drought. Climate research and modeling indicates dryer winters and spring deluges in the Sierra. Receding snow pack, higher rain volume and soil displacement are reducing the carrying capacity of existing storage facilities built 50-60 years ago to serve different conditions.

Increasing surface and groundwater storage, coupled with increasing the natural storage capacity in the State's largest natural winter reservoir, the Sierra Nevada, will enhance long-term water supply. Investments in the Sierra will enhance hydropower generation, provides water for sustainable agriculture, the environment, recreation, California's economy and overall quality of life.

Relevant to funding in Section 79721, starting on page 7, Line 6-10, I propose the following language change for clarity and to provide additional funding opportunities for the Mountain Counties Overlay.

"For purposes of this subdivision, the Sacramento and San Joaquin River hydrologic regions do not include the Delta Overlay or the Mountain Counties Overlay. As the Mountain Counties Overlay provides the majority of the statewide water supply, the Mountain Counties Overlay is eligible for funds from the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River hydrologic regions."

Also, in SB 927, the following statement has been deleted. *"Ten million dollars of the interregional funds shall be available for a grant to the University of California, Sierra Nevada Research Institute of the University of California, for the development and deployment of measurement infrastructure and related information technology to identify and analyze water supply impacts of climate change on the Sierra Nevada snow pack and runoff."*

There is a great need for "on-the-ground" research and development to determine the impacts of climate change, forest management, and water yield in the Sierra Nevada watersheds. The State should actively support forest management practices and the science-based activities to promote healthy forests and enhance water resources. If not earmarked specifically for the Sierra Nevada Research Institute, I ask that you consider adding the \$10 million dollars back to Page 7, Line 25; Mountain Counties Overlay.

I also propose that you add the following language to P4, Line 40 – ADD – (7) Projects to recover lost storage from sedimentation in existing infrastructure and projects to expand existing infrastructure water supply that provide regional sustainability and statewide benefit. There is a real opportunity to invest in existing reservoirs as a less-costly interim fix to increase water supply short-term. There are many benefits to explore raising existing reservoirs and dredging sediment impacted reservoirs.

Raise Existing Reservoirs

- Increased water supply
- Minimal environmental issues
- Smaller footprint
- Cold water releases timed for fish
- Greater yield, less evaporation "v"-shaped reservoirs high in the Sierra
- Drought protection
- Flood protection downstream, which reduces pressure on the Delta levee system
- Climate change adaption

Dredge existing reservoirs

- Improved flood control
- Recapture lost water storage capacity
- Increased cold water for fish releases
- Remove legacy contaminants such as Mercury to improve downstream water quality

As you know well, increasing water supply is complex, but critical to statewide water supply reliability. California is and will face several long-term water challenges including,

- Sea level rise
- Shifting snow melt runoff from spring to winter
- Changes in average runoff volumes
- Increased persistence of droughts
- Higher water temps in streams and reservoirs
- Higher water demands from temperature and CO2
- Increased flood flows and flood frequencies
- Degraded water quality

There is no silver bullet solution. Increasing water supply reliability and improving water quality for all of California will require difficult decisions by the Governor and Legislature. The water bond should consider a comprehensive statewide “Water Supply Portfolio” from a statewide water system approach:

- Increase the water carrying capacity in the watersheds,
- Increase surface water supply and storage starting at the crest of the Sierra,
- Reduce demand by increased water efficiency practices,
- Optimize recycling opportunities, groundwater injection, and desalination,
- Advance the stewardship of not only the Sierra Nevada Mountains, but across all the watersheds and headwaters in the State.
- Provide for operational and regulatory assurances

Your thoughtful consideration of the many complex issues surrounding California’s water future is greatly appreciated. Again, thank you for this opportunity, and if you have any questions or if I can be of any assistance, please call me at 530.957.7879.

Sincerely,



John Kingsbury, Executive Director
Mountain Counties Water Resources Association

c: The Honorable Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.
Board of Directors, Mountain Counties Water Resources Association

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