

KINGS COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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December 17, 2013

Felicia Marcus, Board Chair
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

Sent via email and U.S. Mail

Dear Ms. Marcus:

I am writing on behalf of the Kings County Board of Supervisors to express our views on the State Water Resources Control Board's ("State Board") draft Groundwater Workplan Concept Paper ("Workplan"). Our comments are directed to the following four "key management elements" of the plan: oversight and enforcement, governance and management, funding, and monitoring and assessment. We also wish to emphasize that any plan for addressing the management of groundwater resources should include a discussion on surface water storage.

- **Oversight and Enforcement:** Kings County shares the State Board's concern for groundwater supply and quality, and agrees that more must be done to protect our state's groundwater resources. However, because groundwater is a highly local problem with no one-size-fits all solution, we believe that groundwater management should remain a function of local government. Because of the emphasis in section 3.5 of the Workplan on "Potential Options for New Water Board Actions," we are concerned that the Workplan represents a first step in a move away from local control of groundwater resources.
- **Governance and Management:** The state has a role to play in groundwater management, but rather than playing a regulatory role and establishing new "top-down" bureaucracies, the environment will be served best if the state plays a supportive role in groundwater management. To this end, we believe that section 3.3 of the Workplan contains positive proposals, including focusing regulatory activities, providing incentives and technical assistance to growers, assessing legal obstacles for groundwater recharge, evaluating local groundwater management programs, and creating a standardized set of authorities that local agencies can draw upon to manage groundwater resources. At the local level,

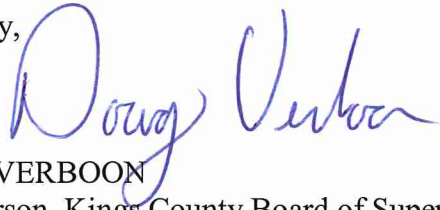
we need the state to play a role in coordinating local activities; providing education, financial incentives, and technical assistance to growers to help them incorporate best management practices into their business models; serving as a clearinghouse of technical information; assessing local activities to provide *nonbinding* recommendations for improving ground and surface water management plans.

- Funding: To be effective in our management role, cash strapped local agencies require additional funding from the state. We therefore urge the State Board to provide more specific suggestions in the Workplan to fund local agencies' groundwater management efforts. This funding needs to come not only in the form of competitive grants for devising new and innovative management strategies, but also in the form of ongoing appropriations to fund existing mandates and programs.
- Groundwater Recharge and Storm Water Capture: Item number 5 under section 3.2.2 of the Workplan addresses groundwater recharge and storm water capture by identifying the following potential "monitoring and assessment" actions by agencies other than the State Board: "Develop estimates of storm water capture and groundwater recharge potential, and a tracking database to inform water resource planning and permitting decisions." Item number 1 under section 3.3.2 in the discussion of governance and management proposes the following: "Assess legal obstacles and associated liability for groundwater recharge with sources that contain low level contaminants." We are pleased to see the Workplan address groundwater recharge and storm water capture, but more must be done than simply develop estimates of the potential for engaging in these practices and assessing legal obstacles to doing so. Local agencies need funding and technical assistance to expand groundwater recharge and storm water capture operations, and the State Board should confirm that groundwater recharge is a beneficial use of surface water.
- Surface Water Storage: The current draft of the Workplan does not make the connection between groundwater management and the availability of surface water. Crops need water to grow. If surface water is not available, then farmers must turn to groundwater. The only alternative is to let fields lay fallow, watch food prices to rise, increase dependence on imports, and put farm laborers and individuals in the food processing and packaging industry out of work. To reduce our dependence on groundwater under multiple dry year conditions like those currently facing the state, California must do a better job of storing surface water, both by building new reservoirs and through expanded use of groundwater recharge.

In summary, more needs to be done in California to protect groundwater resources. Local agencies should play a leading role in providing oversight and enforcement, and state agencies should provide coordination, support, and funding to help local government agencies fulfill their role. Funding for storm water capture needs to be a priority, and surface water

storage capacity must be increased, both by creating new reservoirs and by increasing use of groundwater recharge.

Sincerely,



DOUG VERBOON
Chairperson, Kings County Board of Supervisors

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