



August 9, 2017

Mr. Armando Quintero, Chair
California Water Commission
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236-0001



Re: Support for Proposed Refuge Benefits of Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion Proposition 1 Application

Dear Chair Quintero:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our support for the water supply benefits for wildlife refuges proposed in the Water Supply Investment Program (WSIP) funding application submitted for Proposition 1 funding for the Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion Project. Without yet thoroughly reviewing the application, our detailed analysis and comments cannot be presented, but we would like to highlight that we believe the potential benefits of this project for California ecosystems are substantial.

Los Vaqueros Reservoir is an off-stream reservoir in Brentwood, owned and operated by Contra Costa Water District, that can be expanded to provide ecosystem benefits that qualify for Proposition 1 funding. The primary ecosystem benefit proposed for the Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion Project is an increased supply of water deliveries to south-of-Delta wildlife refuges. As a coalition, we consider these wildlife refuge benefits to be critically important.

Enacted in 1992, the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) established baseline water requirements for 19 California refuges and wildlife areas. Of those, 14 refuges are located south of the Delta. In the Act's 25-year history, the state/federal partnership created by the CVPIA has only delivered 100% of needed refuge water supplies to south-of-Delta refuges (that have the required conveyance capacity) on only two occasions. The proposed Los Vaqueros Expansion Project would provide a significant enhancement of CVPIA Incremental Level 4 (IL4) deliveries, averaging 46,000 acre-feet annually. This water, typically used for the seasonal irrigation of wetland plants and winter habitat water, is especially critical south of the Delta, where water supplies are scarce. The problem is so significant that some refuges, dependent on IL4 water for two thirds or more of their water supply, are left virtually dry in drought years.

Proposition 1, as set forth in Water Code section 79754, directed the California Department of

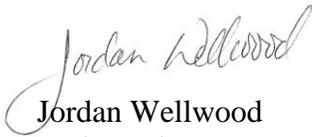
Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to provide priorities and relative environmental values of ecosystem benefits to the California Water Commission (CWC), for use in reviewing the WSIP applications. That section also directed the CWC to consult with CDFW in the development of the program's regulations. Increasing water supply to refuges is identified in the WSIP guidelines as one of these key goals, and the Los Vaqueros Expansion Project proposes to provide a significant volume of water to meet that key goal.

Only 5% of the historical footprint of the Central Valley's wetlands remain, largely as publicly and privately managed refuge lands. These wetlands serve as critical habitat to hundreds of winged and terrestrial species, are part of California's commitment to national and international Pacific Flyway agreements, help to recharge overdrafted aquifers, serve as filters to improve water quality flowing to the Delta, and provide hunters and other recreationalist opportunities to interact with nature.

Expanding Los Vaqueros Reservoir is an innovative project that embodies what the voters approved when they passed Proposition 1, including significant, well-defined public benefits for the environment. We believe the refuge water supply benefits from the proposed expansion could make a tremendous difference for critical wetland habitats, and are supportive of the CWC funding those benefits. Collectively and independently, our organizations look forward to providing more detailed comments and feedback on the proposed project as the CWC selection process moves forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



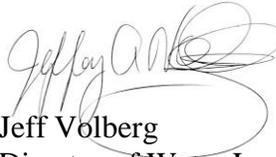
Jordan Wellwood
Project Director
The Nature Conservancy



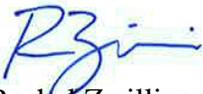
Catherine Hickey
Conservation Director, Pacific Coast and
Central Valley Group
Point Blue Conservation Science



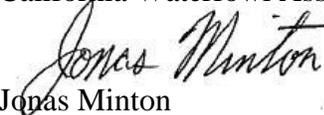
Mike Lynes
Director of Public Policy
Audubon California



Jeff Volberg
Director of Water Law and Policy
California Waterfowl Association



Rachel Zwillinger
Water Policy Advisor
Defenders of Wildlife



Jonas Minton
Senior Water Policy Advisor
Planning and Conservation League

cc: California Water Commission members
Jerry Brown, General Manager, Contra Costa Water District