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

Dear Chair Quintero:

Ducks Unlimited (DU) is seeking your support of two water supply projects benefiting wildlife refuges in California, as proposed in the California Water Supply Investment Program (WSIP) applications for Proposition 1 funding for the Sites Project and Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion Project. Both projects will provide ecological benefits specifically for migratory waterfowl and federally listed threatened & endangered species. Ducks Unlimited believes your support on both these projects would carry a strong influence with the California Water Commission (CWC) and specific value to California citizens and California's wildlife.

Sites is a planned off-stream reservoir that diverts water from the Sacramento River and its tributaries. Sites water can have multiple beneficial effects on wildlife. For example, water released from reservoirs in Northern California, which could include Sites, may serve as a cold-water source for salmon rearing in the upper reaches of the rivers, be used to grow crops in the valley, and can also provide significant wildlife habitat for millions of birds along the Pacific Flyway. Additionally, a significant portion of water released for salmon would also flow south to California's Bay-Delta providing salinity control, further benefit fisheries and provide water supply for other water users throughout the state. The Proposition 1 public benefits of Sites includes: ecosystem improvements, including changing the timing of water diversions, improvement in flow conditions, temperature, or other benefits that contribute to restoration of aquatic ecosystems and native fish and wildlife, including those ecosystems and fish and wildlife in the Delta. Most importantly, Sites is able to provide water for wildlife north & south of the Delta.

Los Vaqueros is an off-stream reservoir in Brentwood, currently 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.

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 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 the key priorities. The Sites Reservoir

Project and Los Vaqueros Expansion Project propose to provide a significant volume of water to meet this conservation priority.

Only 5% of the historical acreage of the Central Valley's wetlands remain, largely as publicly and privately managed wetlands. 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 sportswomen, sportsmen, and recreationalists opportunities to interact with nature.

Chair Quintero, your support on investing in Sites Reservoir Project and expanding Los Vaqueros Reservoir is critical to move the ball forward in carrying out what the voters approved when they passed Proposition 1. These projects include significant, well-defined public benefits for the environment. Ducks Unlimited believes the refuge water supply benefits from the proposed projects could make a tremendous difference for critical wetland habitats and we are supportive of the CWC funding both. We look forward to providing more detailed comments and feedback on the proposed project as the CWC selection process moves forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark E. Biddlecomb". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark E. Biddlecomb
Director of Operations
Western Region

Cc: Edmund G. Brown Jr., Governor, California.