



January 28, 2021

Chair Bob Wieckowski
 California Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 2
 State Capitol, Room 5019
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Chair Richard Bloom
 California Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3
 State Capitol, Room 6026
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: CNRA BCP - \$125 million Proposition 68 Funding for Habitat Improvement Projects SUPPORT

Dear Chair Wieckowski and Chair Bloom:

On behalf of the organizations listed below, we write to communicate our strong support for the California Natural Resources Agency’s (CNRA) “Proposition 68: Habitat Improvement” budget change proposal (BCP). This BCP requests an appropriation of \$125 million in Proposition 68 funds for the Protecting California’s Rivers, Streams and Watersheds Program (Program) for Fiscal Year 2021-22.

In January 2019, the Newsom Administration began leading a coalition of federal, state and local agencies, conservation groups, non-governmental organizations, and other interested parties to develop and implement a collaborative approach to enhance conditions for fish and wildlife in the Delta and its tributaries. This effort, known as the Voluntary Agreements process, represents the state’s best opportunity to advance a comprehensive strategy to improve habitat and flows for the benefit of native fish and wildlife species while also providing for the water supply needs of California’s communities

and economy. The Voluntary Agreements provide a unique benefit by integrating proposed flow and habitat improvements, which will be supported by a transparent science and adaptive management program.

The augmented flow and habitat restoration actions included in the Voluntary Agreements would be funded through a combination of state, local, and federal funding. The appropriation of the remaining \$125 million of the \$200 million total authorized under Public Resources Code 80114, as proposed by the BCP, is critical to ensuring that the early implementation actions proposed by the Voluntary Agreements can be funded. In Fiscal Year 2019-20, \$70 million of this funding was appropriated by the Legislature for these purposes, with \$50 million awarded by CNRA to date for 15 “no regrets” habitat improvement projects across the greater Delta watershed. These broadly-supported projects include efforts that engage local agencies and non-governmental organizations as project proponents that contribute key expertise, staff, and equipment, as well as effectively leverage additional federal and local funding sources. Appropriating the remaining funding will allow the state and project proponents to complete additional habitat improvement projects; as detailed in the BCP:

This request is needed to fund additional projects through the Program, which aims to restore natural aquatic or riparian functions or wetlands habitat for birds and aquatic species, protect or promote the restoration of endangered or threatened species, enhance the reliability of water supplies on a regional or interregional basis, and provide significant regional or statewide economic benefits. State agencies continue to work to advance the Voluntary Agreements (VAs) with water users to improve the health of the Sacramento River, San Joaquin River and Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta. These agreements hold promise to achieve important, durable environmental improvements of these river systems that can be implemented expeditiously. Projects funded through this appropriation advance habitat restoration that will provide critical environmental benefits to these river systems regardless of whether VAs are achieved. Allocation of this funding is consistent with the intent of the voters in enacting Prop 68.

The Voluntary Agreements can replace the conflicts that have defined the last three decades of Delta water management with a collaborative, adaptive, and science-based approach that will move the state substantially closer to the coequal goals of protecting, restoring, and enhancing the ecosystem of the Delta and its tributaries and providing a more reliable water supply for California. We support CNRA’s stated commitment to “making the Program’s application process rigorous and transparent to the public.” In fact, the Voluntary Agreements include a collaborative governance structure that could be utilized in the project selection process as soon as this year to ensure that the funds are spent wisely and quickly. In the coming weeks, water supplier participants in the Voluntary Agreement process look forward to presenting a detailed Voluntary Agreement plan that is responsive to the Newsom Administration’s February 2020 Voluntary Agreement “Framework” proposal. Approving this BCP will provide the Newsom Administration with a key asset to deploy as we continue our collective effort to finalize and begin full implementation of Voluntary Agreements.

It is for these reasons that we support CNRA’s “Proposition 68: Habitat Improvement” BCP and respectfully request your support when this item is taken up in your respective subcommittees. Please contact any of the signatories below with any questions.

Sincerely,

Alameda County Water District

Robert Shaver

Association of California Water Agencies

Dave Eggerton

California Chamber of Commerce

Valerie Nera

California Citrus Mutual

Casey Creamer

California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association

Priscilla Rodriguez

California Farm Bureau Federation

Danny Merkley

California Fresh Fruit Association

Ian LeMay

California Municipal Utilities Association

Danielle Blacet-Hyden

Central Coast Water Authority

Ray Stokes

City of Garden Grove

Samuel K. Kim

City of Roseville

Mayor Krista Bernasconi

Coachella Valley Water District

Jim Barrett

Cucamonga Valley Water District

John Bosler

Eastern Municipal Water District

Paul D. Jones

Foothill Municipal Water District

Nina Jazmadarian

Friant Water Authority

Jason Phillips

Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District

Thad Bettner

Irvine Ranch Water District

Paul Cook

Joint Water Districts

Donnie Stinnett

Kern County Water Agency

Thomas McCarthy

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District

David Pedersen

Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Jeff Kightlinger

Modesto Irrigation District

John Davids

Municipal Water District of Orange County

Robert Hunter

Northern CA Water Association

David Guy

Placer County Water Agency

Andy Fecko

Reclamation District 108

Lewis Bair

Regional Water Authority

Jim Peifer

River Garden Farms

Roger Cornwell

San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District

Heather Dyer

San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Michael Carlin

San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District

Darin Kasamoto

San Geronio Pass Water Agency

Lance Eckhart

San Juan Water District

Paul Helliker

San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority
Federico Barajas

Santa Clara Valley Water District
Rick Callender

Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency
Matt Stone

Santa Margarita Water District
Dan Ferons

Solano County Water Agency
Roland Sanford

South Coast Water District
Rick Shintaku

Southern California Water Coalition
Charley Wilson

State Water Contractors
Jennifer Pierre

Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency
Michael Bessette

Sutter Mutual Water District
Brad Mattson

Tehama Colusa Canal Authority
Jeff Sutton

Three Valleys Municipal Water District
Matthew Litchfield

Turlock Irrigation District
Michelle Reimers

Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District
Tom Love

Western Agricultural Processors Association
Priscilla Rodriguez

Western Canal Water District
Ted Trimble

Western Growers
Dave Puglia

Westlands Water District
Tom Birmingham

Yuba Water Agency
Willie Whittlesey

- cc: The Honorable Members of California Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 2
The Honorable Members of California Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Joanne Roy, Consultant, California Senate Budget Committee
Susan Chan, Consultant, California Assembly Budget Committee
Emilye Reeb, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
Kirstin Kolpitzke, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus
Rachel Ehlers, Principal Fiscal & Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst's Office
The Honorable Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, Natural Resources Agency
Bryan Cash, Assistant Secretary for Administration and Finance, Natural Resources Agency
Miranda Flores, Deputy Secretary for Legislation, Natural Resources Agency
Jennifer Norris, Deputy Secretary for Biodiversity and Habitat, Natural Resources Agency
Christine Hironaka, Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Angela Pontes, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Charlton Bonham, Director, Department of Fish and Wildlife
Clark Blanchard, Deputy Director, Legislative Affairs, Department of Fish and Wildlife
Karla Nemeth, Director, Department of Water Resources
Kasey Schimke, Assistant Director, Legislative Affairs Office, Department of Water Resources