



August 24, 2020

Ms. Sandy Kerl
 General Manager
 San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA)
 4677 Overland Ave
 San Diego, CA 92123

Sent via email

Dear General Manager Kerl:

On behalf of the below signed organizations and our many thousands of members working to advance environmental and social justice and equity throughout the San Diego region, we’re writing to express our opposition to the advancement of Phase B of the Regional Conveyance System (RCS) study and project.

It is telling to us that 18 of the Authority’s 24 member agencies felt it necessary to spend additional public funds to commission their own independent Member Agency Managers (MAM) study to verify the assumptions used by the SDCWA’s consultants in development of the Phase A RCS report, and to ensure ratepayers and the public interest were represented during these proceedings. We believe the findings of the MAM Independent Consultant study are more than enough to demonstrate this project is misguided, unaffordable, and inequitable.

If implemented, this \$6-plus Billion project would dig, tunnel, and pump water over 100 miles through San Diego state parks, a national forest, several active earthquake fault lines, and some of our region's most prized wild lands. As the MAM study shows, if implemented, this project would increase energy demands by 40% over our current conveyance, significantly increasing greenhouse gas emissions while bringing minimal long-term economic or community benefits to San Diego.

Even in the face of the MAM study that showed this project is not cost-effective and would further drive up our water rates, already among the most expensive in the State and country, the SDCWA staff is recommending the expenditure of an additional \$1.3 million to further this project during a time of crisis – a time when all efforts should be made to ensure the affordability of essential services to San Diegans. Instead, the staff's recommendation would waste an additional million-plus dollars of ratepayer money to further study an environmentally destructive pipe dream. This is the definition of throwing good money after bad. In a time when funds are scarce and San Diego families are facing a crisis unlike any other, we strongly urge this Board to **reject moving forward with Phase B** of the study and to **reallocate these funds towards water rate assistance for low-income families in our community**.

Our region is now positioned to address our water needs in a more environmentally and socially just way, by integrating management to achieve multiple benefits for our communities. For instance, a recent City of San Diego study showed that 20% of our water supplies could potentially come from urban stormwater capture, and yield a savings of over half a billion dollars.¹ Approaches such as wastewater recycling, stormwater capture, and green infrastructure bring equitable solutions and benefits to our urban environment and communities including additional supplies, green space development and restoration, improved water and air quality, reduction of flooding, creation of green jobs and job training, and carbon sequestration, to name just a few.² The RCS does exactly the opposite. It is, at its core, an 18th century attempt at a solution to our 21st century problems and needs, is an affront to ratepayer protections and good governance, and exemplifies the disconnect still present between the County Water Authority and the public and communities that depend on affordable, equitable water policies.

Our collective organizations urge you to vote **no** on furthering this project and allocate the money budgeted for further study towards rate-assistance for low income families struggling to pay their water bills during this time of crisis.

¹ "Storm Water Harvesting Augmentation Analysis", by Tetra Tech. Task Order 38, June 2016, City of San Diego.

² For more on the many water, climate, air, and community health benefits of incorporating and funding green infrastructure, see: <https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/benefits-green-infrastructure>.

We look forward to working with our local water agencies towards the development of a just, equitable approach to solving our water supply, water quality, and climate issues in our region.

Sincerely,

Matt O'Malley
Executive Director & Managing Attorney
San Diego Coastkeeper

Diane Takvorian
Executive Director
Environmental Health Coalition

Marco Gonzalez
Executive Director
Coastal Environmental Rights
Foundation

Nicole Capretz
Executive Director
Climate Action Campaign

Dave Hogan
San Diego Chapter Chair
Sierra Club

Laura Walsh
Policy Coordinator
The Surfrider Foundation San Diego
Chapter

Marie Chen
Public Policy Co-Chair
SanDiego350

Lydia Van Note
Board President
San Diego League of Conservation
Voters

Dan Silver, MD
Chief Executive Officer
Endangered Habitats League

Pam Heatherington
Board of Directors Board Member
Environmental Center of San Diego

Laura Hunter
Escondido Neighbors United

Jim Peugh
Conservation Chair
San Diego Audubon Society

Zachary Plopper
Associate Director
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David Garmon, MD
Tubb Canyon Desert Conservancy

Chelsi Sparti
Associate Director
Samuel Lawrence Foundation

Tara Hammond
Chief Environmental Officer
Hammond Climate Solutions

Kyra Greene
Executive Director
Center on Policy Initiatives

Duncan McFetridge
Executive Director
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Save Our Forests & Ranchlands

Sam Mazzeo
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Better.

Emma Jayne Harrison, Ph.D.
Member
Center for Interdisciplinary Environmental
Justice

Michael Torti
Co-Chair, Environmental Committee
Business For Good

Dr. Cindy Lin
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Hey Social Good

Connor Franklin Rey
Partnerships Team Representative
Sunrise Movement San Diego

Leslie Reynolds
Executive Director
Groundwork San Diego – Chollas
Creek