20 June, 2014

Re: AB-155

Honorable Assemblyman Alejo;

The Salinas Valley Water Coalition (SVWC) is a not-for-profit organization comprised of agricultural landowners, farmers and businesses within the Salinas Valley. The SVWC's primary purpose is to participate in the various governmental processes in order to preserve the water resources of the Salinas River Basin and the water rights of its members, to protect their water resources and to effect water policy decisions in a manner that provides this protection while sustaining fairness and equity to all landowners—all stakeholders—within the basin as well as their quality of life.

The SVWC has worked with, and supported, the Monterey County Water Resources Agency in its pursuit of long-term basin balance of supply and demand and its effort to halt seawater intrusion. This support has been based on the belief that the Agency must be committed to developing a program that is cost-effective, reasonable, hydraulically sound and equitable to landowners in all areas of the Salinas Valley.

Community participation is an essential element in any project, and critical to obtaining support for that project. Unfortunately the SVWC was not included in the development of a key element to building an inter-lake tunnel project that would benefit the Salinas Valley and the ratepayers of Zone 2C, and that is the drafting of AB-155.

We appreciate your support of the critical changes made in this bill that is the change from Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin to Salinas River Groundwater Basin. This was a critical change to provide protection to the Salinas Valley of its water resources, and one that prevents unintended implication that the project could transfer water from the Salinas Valley to areas outside that basin. Thank you.

We offer the following additional revisions to further clarify that the inter-lake tunnel project will be built and utilized for the benefit of the landowners and ratepayers who have secured the water rights and paid for the existing reservoirs, and to avoid unintended consequences and the potential of others wanting to 'grab' those resources.

Mission Statement: The water resources of the Salinas River Basin should be managed properly in a manner that promotes fairness and equity to all landowners within the basin. The management of these resources should have a scientific basis, comply with all laws and regulations, and promote the accountability of the governing agencies.
With the following additional modifications, the Salinas Valley Water Coalition supports AB-155 as amended in the Senate Committee on June 17, 2014:

Section 1. (a) (9) The agency has proposed a project to connect Lake Nacimiento and Lake San Antonino for the enhancement and benefit of Zone 2C, by an underground tunnel.

Sec. 2. (4) ... and within the Salinas River Groundwater Basin and the Salinas Valley proper, including necessary subsurface and surface improvements.

We thank you for your consideration and support. Please let me know if you have any questions and/or would like additional information on this matter.

Sincerely,

Nancy Isakson, President
Salinas Valley Water Coalition
(831) 224-2879

cc: Honorable Senator Cannella
Honorable Senator Monning
Honorable Assemblyman Stone
Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Board of Supervisors
Board of Directors

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