



April 1, 2022

The Hon. Dianne Feinstein
US Senate
Hart Senate Office Building
Room 331
Washington, DC20510

RE: Letter of Support for funding Santa Margarita Water District's Ranch Water Filtration Project and Oso Barrier Water Treatment Plant Project

Dear Senator Feinstein:

I understand that the Santa Margarita Water District ("SMWD" or "District") is submitting an application for Congressional Directed Spending for the District's projects to enhance local and regional water supply reliability. I fully support the Ranch Water Filtration Project and the Oso Barrier Water Treatment Plant Project ("Projects"). SMWD's efforts to enhance local water supply reliability through urban return flow and stormwater capture and reuse as well as groundwater recharge in the San Juan Groundwater Basin are precisely the kind of innovative projects we have come to anticipate from the District. The importance of each of these projects to the long-term sustainability and water supply reliability of this part of the county cannot be over-stated and this funding will go a long way toward project implementation.

The District has done a good job of making me aware that virtually all the potable water in the service area is imported from the State Water Project or the Colorado River. This means that our supply in south Orange County is almost completely reliant on water coming to us from hundreds of miles away. These local/regional projects are clearly focused on developing environmentally sensitive, locally-sourced supply for the region to become more resilient, reduce reliance on imported water, control costs, and sustain the region in event of an emergency.

The District's plans to construct infiltration basins, rehabilitate existing wells, repurpose pipelines, and construct new water treatment plants for the Upper San Juan Creek project are ambitious and demonstrate sound planning for the future. The initial 1,600 acre-feet/year ("AFY") yield of locally-sourced water that will be integrated into the District's potable water system is a great step forward toward the 8,240 AFY that will be available from subsequent phases. The Oso Barrier Plant project will capture first flush and urban return flows in San Juan Creek, thereby reducing contamination of the creek and ultimately the ocean. The 1,000 AFY project represents more than 12.5% of the total District recycled water supply.

The District, the second largest in the county, has a long history of providing safe, reliable drinking water, recycled water, and wastewater services to almost 200,000 residents in the south Orange County cities of Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, and San Juan Capistrano. The unincorporated Orange County communities of Coto de Caza, Las Flores, Ladera Ranch, the Rancho Mission Viejo's Village of Sendero and Esencia and soon Rienda, and the Talega development in the City of San Clemente are also served by the District.

Again, I enthusiastically support the District's application for this funding. Should you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration and best regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Victoria Hernandez', written in a cursive style.

Victoria Hernandez
Executive Director, South Orange County Economic Coalition