

August 5, 2020

The Honorable Jared Blumenfeld  
Secretary  
California Environmental Protection Agency  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Blumenfeld:

We are writing to thank you for your engagement with the Yuba Water Agency regarding the State Water Resources Control Board's Water Quality Certificate for the Yuba River Development Project. We would like to share our concerns with you regarding this situation because there was no opportunity for public review or comment on the certificate (issued July 17, 2020).

As community leaders, we are troubled by the significant public safety, economic and social harm that conditions in the certificate would cause throughout Yuba County, if implemented.

These conditions would significantly impact Yuba Water's ability to fulfill its core mission, as it would dramatically decrease the agency's revenue while increasing its operating expenses. The resulting economic fallout would directly harm Yuba County's working families, depriving disadvantaged communities of one of the only local funding sources available to leverage state and federal programs.

As the owner and operator of New Bullards Bar Dam, two smaller dams, and hydropower facilities, Yuba Water produces reliable, carbon-free electricity, provides water supplies to farmers, ranchers and the environment, reduces flood risk throughout Yuba and Sutter counties, and provides other community services, including recreation. The agency maintains the only facilities that control flood flows on the Yuba River. Yuba Water also plays a leadership role in the coordination and financing of flood risk reduction, multi-benefit infrastructure projects including levee improvements.

In the last three fiscal years alone, Yuba Water has contributed \$15.4 million in grant funding and \$36.6 million in low-interest loans that directly support public safety, flood risk reduction and economic development in a county hit hard by flooding in the 1980s and 1990s. The loss of revenue from Yuba Water's power generation and water transfers as a result of the State Water Board's certificate would require the agency to substantially scale-back or reprioritize its investments in community programs and critical infrastructure projects.

One example of Yuba Water's funding support has been in the form of grants to the City of Marysville for repairs to the Marysville Ring Levee. Slated for completion in 2024, this levee system reduces flood risk for the historic City of Marysville, which is home to more than 12,000 people, the region's largest and only level-3 trauma services hospital and the 10,000 jobs it supports, two state highways and two Union Pacific Railroad mainlines.

Another recent round of grants and low-interest loans from Yuba Water will help the Olivehurst Public Utility District and City of Wheatland sustainably design regional solutions for drinking water quality and wastewater services in the southern part of the county. The project is expected to lower development and operations costs for large portions of the county, protect groundwater quality, which is the primary source of water for approximately 80 percent of Yuba County residents, and meet the agency's Groundwater Sustainability Plan commitments under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

The county's school system remains a major barrier to attracting labor and expanding Yuba County's housing market. In an effort to grow awareness of the current and historical significance of the Yuba Watershed and enhance STEM education in local schools, Yuba Water is partnering with local and regional organizations to develop water-resource-focused STEM curriculum for all grades. The goal is to provide a basis for enhancing STEM instruction in all Yuba County schools, and to incorporate the material into a new state-of-the-art Watershed Experience Center, currently in the master planning process. Educational investments are another example of many positive projects that are spreading hope, optimism and sparking excitement about Yuba County's future.

At a time when county expenditures are increasing at a greater rate than revenues, the possibility of losing Yuba Water's financial support is inconceivable. Yuba County residents, the majority of whom live in disadvantaged communities, have already dealt with the fallout of major floods, followed by a decades-long economic downturn and now, COVID-19. As we all confront serious social and economic challenges ahead, we urge the state to recognize the ramifications the certificate presents to Yuba County.

For these reasons, we are grateful for your continued monitoring of this situation and your consideration of the potential impacts to Yuba County, should the certificate proceed in its current state.

Sincerely,



Ricky A. Samayoa  
Mayor  
City of Marysville



Marni Sanders  
Executive Director  
Yuba-Sutter Chamber of Commerce



Kevin Mallen  
County Administrator  
Yuba County



Francisco Reveles, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Yuba County