

OLIVEHURST PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT

Our mission is to provide high quality services to enhance our community's quality of life.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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GENERAL MANAGER

John Tillotson, P.E.

December 3, 2020

Honorable Members of the State Water Resources Control Board
c/o Ms. Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

Re: Comments – Limited Order for Yuba River Development Project Certification

Dear Chair Esquivel, Vice Chair D'Adamo and Board Members Doduc, Firestone and Maguire:

I am writing on behalf of the Olivehurst Public Utility District (OPUD) to share my support for Yuba Water Agency, a public agency that is helping secure a sustainable water supply and significantly reduce flood risk for severely disadvantaged communities in Yuba County, such as ours. I ask that the State Water Resources Control Board vacate the water quality certification issued in July for the Yuba River Development Project, so we can continue to count on the support of Yuba Water Agency to advance critical work in our county.

If you are unfamiliar with Olivehurst, it's important to know that we are a severely disadvantaged community. In fact, more than half of Yuba County's census designated communities are considered disadvantaged under Water Code §79505.5(a), that is, communities with an annual median household income less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median household income, or \$56,982. The annual median household income in our area is less than 60 percent of the state's median, giving us the unfortunate distinction of "severely disadvantaged." In Olivehurst, as well as our neighboring community of Linda, nearly 50 percent of people live below the poverty line, which is four times higher than the state average.

Yuba Water Agency has provided the local cost-share for projects to reduce flood risk on the rivers that produced catastrophic floods in 1955, 1986 and 1997, which devastated Olivehurst and Linda. But our work there is not done. If we don't continue to build our resilience to the expected impacts of climate change, how long until Olivehurst floods again?

In addition to its significant investments in reducing flood risk, Yuba Water Agency grants are supporting our efforts to bring much needed improvements to drinking water and wastewater infrastructure to the south part of the county. This work is part of a broader, county-wide economic development initiative to protect groundwater and ensure a more sustainable regional water supply, while encouraging new development that will bring desperately needed jobs and affordable housing.

OPUD, as well as 80 percent of Yuba County's population, relies on groundwater as the sole source of municipal water. Implementation of this water quality certification could dramatically reduce surface-water supplies to Yuba County's farm and ranch families, forcing them to again pump their groundwater

wells, which could push the county's groundwater basin back into overdraft. This would have devastating impacts on our community and add to the state's already overwhelming burden of securing drinking water for so many disadvantaged communities.

Yuba Water Agency is vital to Yuba County's future, and to Olivehurst's future, specifically. We are finally making some progress and have hope that we can begin to secure a better tomorrow for our residents. But, if this water quality certification is allowed to stand as-is, it could have such a devastating *impact on Yuba Water Agency's revenue, and therefore, their ability to fund these projects that our* community so desperately needs. Please vacate this certification and allow us the opportunity to turn things around for Olivehurst.

Respectfully Submitted,



John C. Tillotson, P.E.
General Manager
Olivehurst Public Utility District