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Tom Barnes, ESA

February 1, 2017

626 Wilshire Boulevard, Ste. 1100
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Re: City of San Juan Capistrano Comments on Notice of Preparation of Environmental Impact Report for San Juan Watershed Project

Dear Mr. Barnes:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Notice of Preparation (“NOP”) of an Environmental Impact Report (“EIR”) for the proposed San Juan Watershed Project (“Project.”) As you are aware, State law requires that the Santa Margarita Water District consider all information submitted by any person during the EIR process, including comments on an NOP. (Cal. Pub. Res. Code, § 21082.1; 14 Cal. Code Regs., § 15084(c)). The City of San Juan Capistrano has reviewed the NOP and has several comments relating to potential environmental impacts, alternatives, and mitigation measures for the proposed Project that should be considered in the EIR.

The City considers the project to be beneficial to the basin as a whole, as increasing the amount and quality of water stored in the basin can only serve to benefit its shareholders. And, the additional feed water supply to the Ground Water Recovery Plant can only lower its unit operations costs. But, the City considers it necessary for the EIR to fully analyze the means and method to gain shareholder acceptance of the quantification of the yield of the Project. The problem for the City is that it has, by contract with the San Juan Basin Authority (the Authority”), the right to use 5,800 afy. However, in practice, the basin no longer reliably yields sufficient water to meet that demand, resulting in the basin pumping plan with lowered yields. If the Project overstates its yield in any year, then the shareholders operating under the basin pumping plan could receive even less water than had the Project not been constructed.

Thank you for considering the above comments for inclusion in the draft EIR. Please add the City to the distribution list for the draft EIR and all future notices associated with the proposed Project.

Sincerely,

Steve W. May
Public Works & Utilities Director
SMay@SanJuanCapistrano.org

San Juan Capistrano: Preserving the Past to Enhance the Future