

Salinas Valley Water Coalition



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Monterey County Board of Supervisors
Supervisor Fernando Armenta, Chair
240 Church Street
Salinas, Ca 93901

14 January, 2003

Re: Salinas Valley Water Project Engineer Report and Authorization of Ballot Proceeding Pursuant to Proposition 218

Dear Chair Armenta and Board Members;

The Salinas Valley Water Coalition (SVWC) is a non-profit organization whose members has supported, and continues to support, the Monterey County in its pursuit of long-term balance of the supply and demand of water in the Salinas River basin and its effort to halt seawater intrusion. Representatives of the Salinas Valley Water Coalition have participated in good faith in the various Monterey County Water Resource Agency (MCWRA) 'activities' pertaining to the issues surrounding Zones 2/2A as well as the development and implementation of the Salinas Valley Water Project. This has included participation in the Settlement Committee established by Judge Silver, the Ad-hoc Assessment Committee and the Cost Allocation Committee, all in an effort to evaluate and better understand the Agency and its administrative and operational systems, and to develop a new and proportional form of assessment(s) to replace the Agency's existing Zone 2 and 2A water standby charges.

The Salinas Valley Water Project has been designed to halt seawater intrusion and restructure the existing zones to better manage our reservoir operations. We believe the Resolution before you today mitigate many of the issues that have remained outstanding from prior projects and we believe you should support it.

Proposition 218 requires mailed notice which also includes a ballot to be returned by the property owners. The notice, ballot, and return envelope must be mailed to property owners at least 45 days before the required public hearing on the assessment. During the 45 days between the time the notice is mailed and the hearing is held, the engineers report and all other pertinent materials or public records must be made available to property owners for their review, along with the address where they may review the documents. It must also set forth:

- "1) The amount proposed to be charged as an assessment against the specific parcel.
- 2) The amount proposed to be charged as an assessment to the entire district.
- 3) The length of time the proposed assessment will be in place.
- 4) the reasons for the assessment and the grounds upon which the proposed assessment for the parcel was calculated.
- 5) The date, location and time of the required public hearing.
- 6) A summary of the protest procedure, including instructions for the completion and return of the ballot.

The Salinas Valley Water Coalition believes the **notice and ballot** should be as specific as possible. The more information provided the better informed the landowners. It should be clear to them what the assessment parameters are, i.e. the sunset date for the assessments, what basis, and how, can the assessments be increased, will there be an annual increase pursuant to some cost of living index; the various caps that are in place on a certain portion of the assessment (it has been recommended that the administration portion be capped

at a certain level – what happens to the assessments once the cap is met); etc. In other words, as much information as possible should be included in the notice. After all, this is what the landowners are voting on. They need to clearly understand exactly what the assessment is for and how it will be managed.

It is unfortunate that the specific language is not available to us today. It is my understanding that the Agency will be distributing the actual notice and ballot language to all Cost Allocation Committee members and to other members of the public, for review and comment. The Salinas Valley Water Coalition looks forward to working with staff in developing a statement that provides the information so landowners will be fully informed when voting. It is important that the voter is able to make an informed decision!

Representatives from one end of the Valley to the other, each with differing opinions and interests, have worked together to develop the recommendation before you. We believe we each have given “something” up, but also believe that the end product is worth supporting. In this work, we each have expended considerable time and resources engaging consultants and working with Agency staff to develop useful, factual, information supported by scientific data. We believe the ‘Recommended Strategy, the matrix’ and the “Draft 3 Resolution” as presented by the Cost Allocation Committee and supported by the Monterey County Water Resources Agency supports the findings, are equitable and reflect understandable and proportional cost-benefit analysis. Anything less may be unacceptable. It is important that all of these elements are included within the notice and ballot. It is our understanding that they will. Our support is also predicated on this understanding.

Thank You,

Nancy Isakson, Consultant
Salinas Valley Water Coalition

Cc: MCWRA
SVWC Board of Directors