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<<To>>

The Cosumnes Groundwater Authority (CGA) is a joint powers authority comprised of local public agencies, each of which serves as a Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Cosumnes Groundwater Subbasin. CGA plays a coordinating role among these agencies, and it is under this umbrella that the GSAs collaborate in order to ensure the basin's continued compliance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

CGA has reviewed the Delta Tunnel Project Draft EIR and has identified a feature of the project and associated environmental risk that has been dismissed from detailed consideration. Specifically, the Draft EIR fails to identify and characterize the impact of local and regional groundwater conditions. That oversight is particularly concerning to CGA and its members: like many basins in the state, the Cosumnes Subbasin has already submitted a Groundwater Sustainability Plan for DWR's review, and has committed significant time, effort, and money towards implementing that plan.

Specifically, CGA finds that the Draft EIR does not:

- adequately consider the impacts of the project construction phase on local groundwater conditions and sustainability plans,
- provide appropriate mitigation to identify and avoid/minimize potential significant impacts resulting from dewatering, and
- evaluate the projects impact on potential saltwater intrusion into the groundwater system.

With increasingly dramatic weather patterns, the strain on local domestic groundwater wells is ever-present. With less consistent rain/surface water to replenish the groundwater subbasins, we have started to see an increasing number of well owners in precarious situations even within the relatively stable Cosumnes Subbasin. The Draft EIR does not adequately consider, or even disclose, the potential impacts that project construction (including significant dewatering in and around the construction sites) may have on local groundwater conditions. Adding an additional stressor to our region could inadvertently impact not only agriculture and land use activities, but jeopardizes the future of shallow well owners who rely on groundwater for their human right to water.

CGA is also concerned that many of the projects' potential impacts are directly aligned with the undesirable effects that governing GSAs are tasked with preventing under SGMA. For example: GSAs must set management criteria surrounding saltwater intrusion and must take action to reduce or eliminate that undesirable result when it occurs. The Draft EIR does not analyze the potential impacts of the project's construction phase, nor does it consider how project operations will impact the efforts of local GSAs to meet their pre-existing GSP sustainability criteria. Failure to explore or disclose these potential impacts pits local GSAs against the State, and foists the burden of mitigating for these potential impacts onto the GSAs and local community, instead of on the project proponent. That result is inequitable and inconsistent

with both CEQA and the Water Code's requirement that state agencies consider the policies of SGMA and plans adopted pursuant to that law when taking actions that intersect with those groundwater management activities (see, e.g., Water Code §§ 10720.9; 10726.8).

In conclusion, the CGA finds that the Draft EIR fails to adequately address or evaluate the potential impact on groundwater conditions throughout the project area and adjacent groundwater subbasins. The CGA provides these findings to advise the Department of Water Resources of our concerns and remedies to correct the deficiencies above mentioned in the Delta Tunnel Project Draft EIR. We are available to discuss these findings further if requested.

Sincerely,

Austin Miller,  
Cosumnes GSP Plan Manager

Lindsey Carter,  
CGA Chair