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California State Senate

SENATOR
SCOTT WILK
TWENTY-FIRST SENATE DISTRICT



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BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE #4

January 31, 2017

California Water Commission
Armando Quintero, Chair
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236

Mr. Quintero,

As a coauthor of the Water Quality, Supply and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Assembly Bill 1471) which referred the Proposition 1 Water Bond to the statewide ballot, I have been particularly interested in its implementation and use. I continue to monitor the administration of those funds and in that monitoring it has come to my attention that 11 individual projects have applied for funding under the Water Supply Investment Program (WISP). I write today to extend my full support of these applications and to urge your approval of all 11 projects.

Water capture, storage and conveyance improvements are the most significant safeguards against continued cyclical drought conditions we have and inevitably will face here in California. It is my goal as a servant of the people of California to ensure our state is taking all measures to ward off the potential perils and pitfalls presented by water shortage and these 11 projects will advance that cause and help us survive and thrive with whatever water we are blessed to receive, no matter how little that may be in the coming years.

The people of California, in approving Prop. 1 by 67 percent of the vote, identified water capture, storage and conveyance infrastructure improvements as a vital step forward for California's water security. It is crucial that we not lose sight of that priority as we strive to best serve the people of this state. It is with that in mind that I convey my strong disappointment in the stance taken thus far by the Water Commission in their administration of the WISP application process.

It appears, based on recent events, that the Water Commission and its staff have adopted a position that is contrary to the intent of Prop. 1 to develop water supply storage projects as outlined in Chapter 8 of that proposition. All 11 WSIP funding application public benefit ratios have been found by your staff to be extraordinarily and unjustifiably low. Five of those applications now rate below one, six others stand at zero.

To my understanding those determinations were based largely on staff's lack of awareness and comprehension of information presented to them by applicants during the extremely convoluted and overly complex application process. I understand staff may be working under public benefit ratio scoring guidelines established for them, their discretion may be impeded by those guidelines and if that is the case, I implore you to seek remedy post haste.

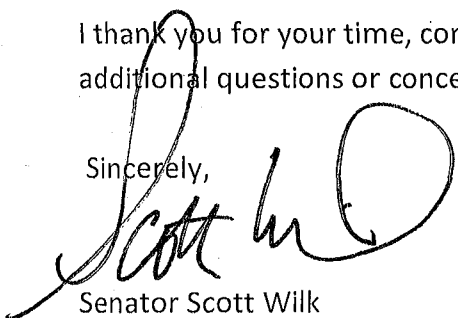
Additionally, as you may know, dialogue and communication are key factors in applying sound public policy for our people. Unfortunately, it is my understanding that Water Commission staff are not embracing that value as they administer this most important program. Applicants have conveyed that staff is allowing them but one opportunity to clarify or correct any issues in their applications or problems staff may have with their projects and that staff are not permitted to communicate with applicants at all until their May meeting. This is not only unreasonable, it is counterproductive to the goals of the state, and people therein, when they entrusted the Commission to conduct these activities on their behalf.

The approval of applications under WISP and the dissemination of Prop. 1 funds for water storage projects is of the utmost importance to our state's ongoing efforts to address our changing climate and our ongoing cyclical drought conditions. The future of our economic livelihood depends on those efforts and impeding them with unfoundedly low public benefit ratios, unreasonably complex application processes and untimely distribution of the over \$7 billion in taxpayer dollars meant to address this very real issue is not only a disservice to the people of this great state, but a dereliction of the duties bestowed upon the Water Commission and its staff.

I respectfully urge you at this time to reevaluate the WISP application processes in place, the public benefit ratio scoring that occurs as a part of those processes and the overall Prop. 1 administration techniques being employed by the Commission. It was the intent of the Legislature, the Governor and the people of California – all of whom approved this bond measure – that Prop. 1 funds be used expeditiously to help improve our state's water collection, storage and conveyance infrastructure. The Water Commission was tasked and entrusted with the carrying out of this most crucial effort and achieving those goals. I hope most sincerely that you will keep that in mind when reviewing not only this letter but the communications of my colleagues in the Legislature and, subsequently, the processes currently in place at the Water Commission.

I thank you for your time, consideration and tireless service to the people of this state. Should you have any additional questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 651-4021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Wilk", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the typed name of the sender.

Senator Scott Wilk
21st Senate District