



November 1, 2021

DRAFT

Urban and Multibenefit Drought Relief Grant Program Manager  
California Department of Water Resources  
Division of Regional Assistance  
[PROGRAM ADDRESS TBD]

RE: Water Agency Contractor Letter of Support for the *Santa Rosa Plain Water Supply Resiliency Project*

Dear Grant Program Manager,

This letter is submitted by the eight Water Agency Contractors and Marin Municipal Water District (Water Contractors) who purchase water from the Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water) in accordance with various existing contractual agreements. The Water Contractors include the Cities of Cotati, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa, Sonoma, Town of Windsor, the North Marin and Valley of the Moon Water Districts and the Marin Municipal Water District. The Water Contractors are collectively responsible for providing drinking water service to over 600,000 people in Marin and Sonoma Counties.

The Water Contractors strongly support Sonoma Water's grant application for the *Santa Rosa Plain Water Supply Resiliency Project* (Project) submitted to the California Department of Water Resources' Urban and Multibenefit Drought Relief Grant Program.

The 2020-21 drought in Sonoma County rivals the 1976-77 drought as the drought of record, and has resulted in severely diminished water supplies and shortages experienced by many water users. As a result, the County of Sonoma proclaimed a drought emergency on April 27, 2021, and the State of California proclaimed a state of emergency in Sonoma and Mendocino counties due to drought conditions in the Russian River Watershed as early as April 21, 2021.

Sonoma Water's Project takes place at two existing well sites, and seeks to rehabilitate these well sites to provide important drought relief for the region (in addition to seismic resiliency), and also includes the capacity to recharge winter/spring water into the groundwater subbasin through aquifer storage and recovery to replace extracted groundwater. Sonoma Water has utilized these well sites to provide important drought relief for every drought since the 1977 drought, including the most recent prior drought and ending in 2016. In addition, the wells were operated relatively continuously from 1999 to 2009. However, since 2016 recent changes to state water quality regulations regarding chlorine contact time have rendered the wells non-operable. This Project would: (1) restore these well sites to comply with chlorine contact requirements and boost the current drinking water supply; and (2) add vital recharge capacity to the aquifer to ensure that operation of the wells supports compliance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

This Project recognizes the role of groundwater to provide emergency relief due to drought and seismic events, while also recognizing that we must replace the water used during these emergencies once winter water becomes available. The Project's well sites are located in the Santa Rosa Plain groundwater subbasin, which is designated as a medium priority basin for the California Department of Water Resources and thus is subject to the requirements of SGMA. The Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency is responsible for implementation of SGMA in the subbasin, and has developed a draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) for the subbasin that is currently in public review. The inclusion of aquifer recharge in this project helps to meet one of the recommended projects contained in the draft GSP identified as being necessary to achieve sustainability.

The development of the Project takes important steps towards meeting the twin needs of the current drought crisis: boost water supply while simultaneously building capacity to sustainably manage precious groundwater resources for the future. Future groundwater use from Sonoma Water's wells in the Project is also incorporated into the required 50-year water budget in the public review draft of the GSP and would not represent an unaccounted-for additional demand on groundwater resources. This Project will provide recharge capacity at each well site, and therefore build the recharge capacity our region desperately needs.

We recognize and are committed to the importance of sustainably managing our groundwater resources, and believe this proposal is a necessary step to effectively manage groundwater in the region to achieve groundwater sustainability while responding to water supply emergencies such as drought and seismic events. Therefore, we support this proposal, and highly recommend its sponsorship by the Department of Water Resources. We look forward to hearing of its success.

Respectfully submitted,

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Susan Harvey, City of Cotati Council Member  
Chair, Water Advisory Committee

cc: Grant Davis, General Manager of Sonoma County Water Agency