

(Draft letter from the Board Chair Santos to the 15 city mayors and the president of the County Board of supervisors. This is the version approved by Chair Santos)

Dear **xxxxx**:

As you may be aware, the Santa Clara Valley Water District (District) regularly conducts homeless encampment cleanups along local streams to reduce the amount of trash and pollution entering local waterways. In Fiscal Year 2018, the District carried out 571 homeless encampment cleanups along creeks and spent about \$1.5 million to remove nearly 2,000 tons of trash. In the last five years, the District has been carrying out an average of 400 annual cleanups. This effort is funded by the District's voter-approved Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program, which has a target and funding for only 52 cleanups a year for a 15-year period, ending in 2028.

The District carries out these cleanups in partnership with local cities, agencies, non-profit organizations, and individual and corporate volunteers that provide police and security support, social services and housing, and volunteers for cleanup.

Recently, however, there has been a growing concern about the safety of District field staff and volunteers conducting cleanups in our creeks due to multiple incidents with homeless individuals and discovery of weapons, live ammunition and drug production facilities. As a result, the District has paid for police security when not available through cooperative efforts, which has adversely impacted the cleanups the District is able to conduct because that reduces the funding then available to pay for the cleanup efforts themselves. In addition, volunteer groups have also indicated that recruiting volunteers is becoming more difficult due to these safety concerns.

To help address these issues, I am requesting that the City/County of **XXXX (name of the agency)** boost our current partnership, specifically in terms of providing police security for District staff and others during cleanups. Safety is critical to our work for the community and the efforts of our volunteers.

The District also requests law enforcement resources for patrolling waterways to discourage re-establishment of encampments and to address illegal activities, including environmental crimes, in the creeks.

Homelessness is a growing and multi-faceted problem that can only be solved through strong collaboration and partnerships between public agencies, businesses, nonprofit organizations and volunteers. We appreciate your cooperation and look forward to hearing how you can further contribute to help resolve this complex issue affecting all of our communities. We need your help to protect the environment and to keep our creeks clean.

If you have any additional questions or would like additional information, please contact Sue Tippetts, Deputy Operating Officer, at (408) 630-2253.

Sincerely,

Richard P. Santos
Chair/Board of Directors

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