



**TO:** Board of Directors

**FROM:** Shiloh Ballard

**SUBJECT:** 12/09/25 Board Meeting (Agenda Item 14)

**DATE:** December 8, 2025

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As we reach the last meeting of the year, I wanted to send a brief note of thanks to those of you who have been making sure I get up to speed as quickly as possible. It is a privilege to serve as a democratically elected representative for the Water District. I look forward to continuing working with you all to make sure our water supply and quality is plentiful, safe, and secure.

I also wanted to mention something pertaining to the previous meeting.

**Watershed Capital Program and Prioritization**

At the last board meeting, staff sought feedback on ways to rejigger several watershed projects. While I overall agree with the direction, I wanted to reiterate my comments.

Bear with me as I repeat much of what our staff and Board already knows, but growth impacts (water use, air pollution, energy demands, species extinction, etc) all come back to land use. How and where we grow dictates our environmental footprint.

As it relates to flood protection projects (the bulk of what we were talking about) if we as an agency do not prioritize, even more, influencing how cities grow, we will always be in reactive mode, mitigating the impacts of poor land use decisions others make. Those decisions externalize environmental costs and force us to clean up their mess.

The City of San Jose is currently updating its general plan. This is an opportunity, as are policy tools like MWENDO.

From my personal experience, when I was first on the General Plan Task Force, a tremendous amount of growth was envisioned for Coyote Valley. That growth would have been disastrous for many of the essential functions nature plays for flood protection, fish, and more. Then, in the next general plan update, we voted to shift a lot of that planned growth out of Coyote Valley. Fast forward to today and through leadership of the former Mayor, Committee for Green Foothills, legislation from Assemblymember Ash Kalra, the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, and the Peninsula Open Space Trust, Coyote Valley is envisioned to be a totally different place. Acquisition of properties is well underway.

This was not an accident. Agencies like ours used their clout to influence the City of San Jose, successfully.

I understand this approach isn't a "project" as conventionally defined. But I wanted to take the opportunity to elaborate on my comments. I know my perspective isn't new and that the Board has already played a role historically in finding ways to positively impact city growth decisions. That said, I wanted to add my voice to this line of thinking. A policy approach to impact land use can result in us not having to develop and fund "projects" if we further prioritize and resource this approach.

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