

Remarks on Pacheco to Valley Water, March 10, 2025

Agenda 8.1 March 11, 2025

"Receive an Informational Update on the Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project, Project No. 91954002

Dear Valley Water Board Directors and staff-

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in your hearing on next steps for the possible approval of Pacheco Reservoir.

With approval to raise the San Luis Reservoir Dam by 10 feet, adding 130,000 acre-feet of water per year, there is less urgency for the Pacheco project. The addition will be enough to serve roughly 650,000 people annually, helping California and Santa Clara County better prepare for more extreme weather patterns due to climate change.

Under the current agreement, the federal government will contribute 30% of the funding to raise the San Luis Dam and will receive that same percentage of the water. As you know, Santa Clara County will absorb about half the cost — \$435 million — and add 60,000 acre-feet of water, while seven other Northern California water agencies will add smaller amounts.

For Santa Clara, this would reduce the water shortage in a six-year drought period by about 66%, according to your staff. This additional water can be stored underground and accessed as needed to supplement supplies

With this new information, it becomes increasingly clear the cost of Pacheco makes going forward irresponsible. Valley Water's [FY 2024 Capital Improvement Project report](#) shows poor cost control, with construction costs rising to \$2.2 billion. Without partners and factoring in interest, total costs could reach \$5.5 billion, burdening Santa Clara ratepayers with minimal and uncertain water supply benefits.

Santa Clara households are finding the cost of living in our communities rapidly rising forcing more into poverty and living month to month. Rising wholesale water costs contribute to driving these increases. The Pacheco Dam project would add further financial strain on residents with higher fees.

Valley Water has acknowledged that the Draft Environmental Impact Report from 2022 is insufficient and needs to be revised. Additionally, the federal environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act has yet to start, with no clear timeline for completion, and delays continue to push back the project's progress.

Lastly, the environmental impacts on fragile lands and species impacts the region in ways that cannot be abated.

I urge the District to serve the community and withdraw support for this endeavor.

Sincerely, Rita Norton
Los Gatos

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