

## Max Overland

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**Subject:** Valley Water needs to clear encampments from our waterways and protect their employees

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**From:** Sharon Luna <[luna802@msn.com](mailto:luna802@msn.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2024 3:36 PM

**To:** Board of Directors <[board@valleywater.org](mailto:board@valleywater.org)>

**Cc:** Connie Ludewig <[cludewigs2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cludewigs2@sbcglobal.net)>; Swanee <[swanee@garlic.com](mailto:swanee@garlic.com)>

**Subject:** Valley Water needs to clear encampments from our waterways and protect their employees

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**Dear Valley Water Board Members,**

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express my interest in attending the Valley Water Board meeting scheduled for November 26th, 2024. I have participated in two recent discussions concerning the urgent challenges of homelessness, particularly regarding the safety of your employees and the surrounding communities. The Board should consider taking immediate and proactive measures to remove encampments near the waterways for their employees' and residents' health and safety.

In prior meetings, it was beneficial to hear the concerns voiced by advocates for people experiencing homelessness regarding the necessity of support and solutions before conducting any "sweeps." However, we must also acknowledge the realities surrounding trespassing on Valley Water lands, the deterioration of the waterways, and the accumulation of waste.

Valley Water's foremost responsibility must always be the safety of its employees and surrounding residents. Ensuring proper enforcement is critical. Homeless encampments near water sources can potentially lead to contamination, posing significant and grave risks to water quality and public health.

Additionally, it appears that Valley Water is committed to addressing the challenges of homeless encampments. I would like to understand how these efforts will be funded.

While I appreciate the complexities of the homelessness issue, I was hopeful that the recent summit with County Supervisors and City Mayors would lead to positive developments and solutions. However, it seemed more focused on highlighting ongoing initiatives, praising one another, and funding requests rather than addressing this pressing concern substantively. Unfortunately, representatives from the homeless community were not on the panels to contribute to the summit discussions.

If Valley Water needs additional support for cleanup efforts, it must explore and embrace collaborative opportunities with the County and Cities. Funds from recently approved measures, such as Prop 1 and Measure A, which could provide much-needed help before increasing rates for Valley Water customers. It is essential to recognize that the financial burden of homelessness should not fall solely on taxpayers, especially considering the State mandate that prohibits homeless individuals from living near waterways. I suggest avoiding

**"double dipping" when funds have already been distributed for housing needs, which we continue to hear about the inefficiencies and waste of taxpayer dollars. Again, Valley Water's primary focus should remain on ensuring a reliable supply of clean and safe water for residents while safeguarding your employees' well-being and completing critical projects such as the Anderson Dam.**

**In conclusion, I respectfully urge the Board to consider moving forward with the immediate cleanup of encampments along Valley Water waterways. Your decision will have a far-reaching impact on our communities and to your employees. Accountability in using taxpayer funding is paramount as we strive to manage taxpayer funding responsibly. There is no money tree at the Federal or State levels and accountability is crucial.**

**Thank you for your attention to this critical matter and hope that you will decide to move forward and remove these encampments in a prompt manner. It will be a difficult decision but something needs to be done now. Our waterways need to be clean to protect water quality, the environment and public health.**

**Sincerely,**

**Sharon Luna  
San Martin Resident**