

July 9, 2024

Valley Water Board of Directors  
5750 Almaden Expressway  
San Jose, CA 95118

Dear Valley Water Board of Directors,

We represent the Chambers of Commerce that promote the interests of our local business community in Santa Clara County, and we write to express our support of the proposed Water Resources Protection Zones (WRPZ) Ordinance.

Encampments of unsheltered people along waterways are both a human and an environmental tragedy, causing deaths and negative health outcomes for unsheltered individuals. The health and safety of those living along creeks and waterways are at risk from unhygienic and unsafe living conditions and frequent fires, as well as exposure to the elements. Waterways are often prone to flash floods, causing rapidly rising water that is a serious hazard to unsheltered people living in the channel. In addition, Valley Water's flood protection projects, and the people, businesses, and neighborhoods they protect, are also at risk if action is not taken.

Keeping our creeks clean benefits everyone, neighborhoods and local businesses alike. Valley Water's Stream Maintenance Program (SMP), which mitigates the environmental impacts of critical stream maintenance projects in our neighborhoods, has been impacted by encampment-generated biowaste, hazardous pollutants, and trash and debris. The SMP abandoned seven problematic Invasive Plant Management Program sites and cancelled over thirty-six acres of mitigation credit previously applied to the SMP program due to increasing safety issues and damage to mitigation sites from fires, vehicle traffic, trash and biohazardous materials, large structures, and bank excavations within and adjacent to the mitigation sites. In Fiscal Year 2023-24, more than 2,500 volunteers from National River Cleanup and Coastal Cleanup Days organized by Valley Water accounted for roughly 47 tons of trash removed and 165 miles cleaned, while approximately 1,075 tons of encampment-generated trash and debris were removed by Valley Water staff. These impacts have significantly limited Valley Water's ability to complete mission-critical work.

We support the establishment of an ordinance to address the public safety and environmental crisis happening along creeks, waterways, and the surrounding areas as well as Valley Water's efforts to work with municipal partners to find solutions to address unsheltered homelessness, and therefore, we urge you to adopt the proposed WRPZ Ordinance.

Sincerely,

*Deborah Feng*  
Deborah Feng  
CEO  
Cupertino Chamber of  
Commerce

*Jane Howard*  
Jane Howard  
Interim President/CEO  
Gilroy Chamber of  
Commerce

*Dennis King*  
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