



CITIZENS COMMITTEE TO COMPLETE THE REFUGE

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April 26, 2021

Tony Estremera, Chairperson and Members of the Board of Directors
Valley Water
Submitted via email: Board@valleywater.org

RE: Item 6.3, 04/27/21, Calabazas and San Tomas Aquino Creek Realignment Project

Dear Chair Estremera, Vice Chair Kremen and Members of the Board:

On behalf of the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to ask for your support of the approvals requested by staff for a formal Planning Study, recommended preliminary budget and schedule for the Calabazas and San Tomas Aquino Creek Realignment Project.

On June 7, 2017, I represented the Citizens Committee at a Landscape Vision Workshop hosted by the District, San Francisco Estuary Institute, and the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project. Drawing on the best of science and existing conditions, presenters and hosts assessed the potential for the project before you today. The potential benefits seen, published by SFEI in 2018 as a Vision document, foresaw improved high water flood drainage, improved sediment distribution, enhanced protection from sea level rise and substantial marsh habitat enrichment and enhancement. It also was seen as a first-of-its-kind project in the District's watersheds.

In the years since, as potential sea level rise impacts move steadily closer, the value of this project is even greater. We admire the District's foresight to step up as the lead agency while staff took care to do significant groundwork, resulting in the project approvals before you today.

Earlier this year and with interest in moving this project forward, Citizens Committee submitted letters of support of Valley Water's applications to the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority and the California Prop 1 Watershed Restoration Grant Funds.

We are aware that an important word here is "potential." About 15 years ago, the District was a partner to the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project for the restoration of the Island Ponds in Coyote Creek. Breaching those ponds, connecting with Coyote Creek, was an act of potential. Less than 10 years later, creek sediment had built up old marsh beds, tidal marsh reestablished itself and the endangered Ridgway's rails and salt marsh harvest mice moved in. Potential achieved. This time the District is the lead agency, with the Restoration Project as its partner, again pursuing potential, this time to benefit West Valley communities, shoreline habitat and wildlife.

Please approve the staff requests before you tonight.

Sincerely,

Eileen McLaughlin
Board Member
Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge

CC: Carin High and Gail Raabe, Co-Chairs, CCCR

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