



June 10, 2014

The Honorable Darrell Steinberg
Senate President pro Tem

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Assembly Speaker

California State Legislature
Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Transmitted via Fax and Email

Re: Water Bond

Dear Pro Tem Steinberg and Speaker Atkins:

We are writing today to share our concerns about water bond negotiations in progress.

We understand that substantial portions of the \$11.14 billion bond currently scheduled for the November ballot have been included in an amended version of SB 848 (Wolk), following several weeks of negotiation. We understand that some parties to the negotiation are assuming that a substitute bond measure that includes those substantial portions from the current bond will not draw significant opposition.

Some time has elapsed since the current bond was placed on the ballot, and our groups' positions on that bond may have been forgotten. We want to be very clear: The League of Women Voters of California and Sierra Club California both oppose the current bond scheduled for the 2014 ballot. We are prepared to ensure that our positions are widely known before the November vote should that bond proposal remain on the ballot. We will also oppose the current bond and any substitute bond that is substantially the same as the current bond.

Our organizations share some of the same general expectations of a water bond. We strongly support water conservation and other nonstructural alternatives to help solve the state's water supply problems. We believe that certain forms of water storage may be part of a full suite of projects worthy of bond support, but we do not support public spending on projects that will not deliver commensurate public benefit. We also believe that any bond spending--including on storage projects--should include criteria to prioritize expenditure on the most beneficial projects

that simultaneously meet the public's water supply needs, enhance local and regional resilience in the face of drought, and protect environmental and natural resources. We believe any bond spending demands responsible oversight and accountability.

The current bond slated for the November ballot, particularly as regards storage, fails to meet our expectations. Specifically, Chapter 8 of the current bond has lax, and even misleading, criteria and would fund certain large infrastructure projects, including the proposed Temperance Flat dam and the raising of Shasta Dam, that it is widely believed will not substantially or even significantly improve water delivery. Indeed, the section's criteria are designed to favor such dams. For example, a recreation clause in paragraph (5) of subdivision (a) of Section 79743 gives priority to projects that provide: "Recreational purposes, including, but not limited to, those recreational pursuits generally associated with the outdoors." Even if groundwater management or stormwater capture projects prove more cost-effective and environmentally sound, this clause clearly gives priority to dams. Californians cannot water ski or fish in groundwater or cisterns.

Moreover, the Chapter 8 funds would be continuously appropriated. That means there would be no legislative oversight ensuring that the Chapter 8 funds were expended responsibly on projects that benefit the public and that do not degrade natural resources and environmental quality. Indeed, throughout Chapter 8, and similar bond proposals before the legislature that we have opposed, the environment is an afterthought at best and does not reflect the legislature's and the public's enduring, demonstrated interest in protecting endangered species, wildlife habitat, clean air and clean water.

We support efforts in both houses to develop a more responsible alternative to the current bond. However, an alternative that includes the \$3 billion Chapter 8 from the current bond, without robust criteria and accountability, does not qualify as a responsible alternative. We are disappointed to learn that SB 848 has been amended to include the same Chapter 8 as exists in the current bond.

We urge you to produce a new water bond that the public, and our organizations, can embrace with the confidence that the funds appropriated will be used to improve water conservation, efficiency, and regional resilience to help Californians cope with the current and future droughts.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Phillips
Director
Sierra Club California

Jennifer A. Waggoner
President
League of Women Voters of California

Cc: California Assembly, California Senate, Governor Jerry Brown