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**Re: Comment Letter – Cambria WDR Update, Order No. R3-2014-0050**

Dear Mr. Rokke,

My wife and I have owned a home in Cambria for more than thirty years and have been full-time residents since May, 2012. I am one of the founders of Cambrians for Water and currently serve on its Steering Committee.

I submit this letter to enthusiastically endorse the proposed updated Order No. R3-2014-0050, Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) and Waste Recycling Requirements (WRRs) for the Cambria CSD Emergency Water Treatment Facility and Recycled Water Re-Injection Project.

**The Proposed Order Is Clear, Comprehensive, Reasonable and Effective**

The proposed updated Order is the product of months of hard work by the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board Staff in collaboration with CCSD Staff. We appreciate this good work and thank the Staffs of both agencies.

The proposed updated Order is clear, comprehensive, reasonable and effective. The WDRs and WRRS authorize the operation of Cambria's water facility to supplement our town's precious supply of drinking water while assuring the high quality of the groundwater and surface water and safeguarding the environment, an important consideration of all Cambrians. The Monitoring and Reporting Program (MRP) associated with the proposed Order likewise contains practical and effective terms and conditions to further assure that the facility operates in the clean, safe and effective manner in which it was intended.

In an era where government is frequently second-guessed and often criticized, this proposed Order and MRP represents government at its best. It is a good Order which has

been developed collaboratively for the benefit of our community and for the surrounding environment.

### **This Water Facility is Vitrally Important for Cambria's Well-being**

It is important to keep front of mind how much this water facility means for the community of Cambria. The facility was initially permitted, designed and constructed in 2014 during one of the most severe droughts to grip not only our community but the entire Southwestern region of the United States. Upon completion, the water plant gave us an insurance policy against running out of potable water. Think of the consequences had we not installed this facility and think what would have happened if this Board had not helped us when we needed it. Now, we need your help again.

Without this facility, Cambria must depend on two limited natural aquifers that cannot sustain us during prolonged multi-year droughts. Moreover, as the Staff Report accurately notes, because of global warming the frequency and severity of such droughts will likely increase in the foreseeable future and this water facility is Cambria's means to deal with this imminent threat.

Although the updates concern only the Emergency Water Supply project, when the Sustainable Water Facility receives a regular coastal development permit in the future, the water plant will not only serve Cambria during prolonged and perilous droughts but it will also give Cambria a clear path toward normalcy as a community:

- Among many important benefits, the facility will help to meet Cambria's water demands and improve its year-around supply of water, especially during dry summer months.
- Consistent with best water practices, the facility will provide for indirect potable reuse of recycled water implementing sustainable practices to resist impacts of global warming.
- The facility will also prevent migration of seawater and secondary wastewater effluent into the San Simeon Creek well field, prevent aquifer subsidence, protect the down-gradient San Simeon Creek Lagoon and relieve stress on both the San Simeon Creek and Santa Rosa Creek. In short, the facility will promote the health and safety of Cambria and the surrounding natural environment.

Suffice it to say, the water plant represents protection against immediate water emergencies and it is an essential feature of Cambria's future well-being.

## **The Project Opponents' Objections Should Not Postpone or Derail Adoption of the Order**

When this Order was initially placed on the Board's agenda last June, Staff received a few letters critical of either the facility, the CCSD or both. Some even objected to certain terms and conditions of the Order. These objections are misplaced and should not further delay or derail adoption of the proposed Order.

### **The Project Opponents do not Speak for Cambria**

For context, the individuals who criticize the facility and CCSD are the same half dozen or so people who have opposed this water project since its inception. Many of them, in fact, also oppose every other proposed solution to Cambria's chronic water shortage problem. While not a large group, they are persistent and they can be loud, sometimes possibly giving the false impression that Cambrians do not support the water facility, which could not be further from the truth.

Our grass roots group, Cambrians for Water, has about eight hundred (800) members all of whom have pledged their support of the following mission:

Advocate for Cambria to obtain a Regular Coastal Development Permit for the Sustainable Water Facility (SWF), enabling Cambria to control operation of the facility with minimum restrictions.

Contrary to whatever the project opponents say or do, Cambrians for Water represents the overwhelming majority of Cambria's residents, business owners/operators and property owners who support the facility and the CCSD's vigorous pursuit of a regular coastal development permit.

### **Challenges of the Facility's Final SEIR and ESHA Compliance are Outside This Board's Jurisdiction and Should be Rejected**

Some opposition letters criticized the facility's Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) which the CCSD certified as final on July 27, 2017 following years of research, analysis and public input. CEQA provides the *exclusive* administrative and judicial process to review the adequacy of a final environmental impact report. The CCSD's SEIR stands as the governing environmental document for this facility and the Board must reject all challenges to the adequacy of the SEIR in these proceedings as an improper collateral attack, beyond this Board's jurisdiction.

Some of the opposition letters also assert that the facility does not comply with regulations relating to Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA). This issue appears also to be beyond this Board's jurisdiction and, like the collateral attacks on the SEIR, should be summarily rejected. Moreover, CCSD Staff can respond in detail as to the status of the ESHA issues but I understand that expert biologists representing the

Coastal Commission and CCSD, respectively, have collaboratively resolved many of these concerns.

### **The Project Opponents' Assertions that the Water Facility is Understaffed and the CCSD Untrustworthy Lack Merit**

The CCSD Staff can also provide a detailed response to the project opponents' erroneous claim the CCSD is understaffed or cannot properly operate, monitor or report on the facility. Suffice it to say, that within the last several years, the CCSD has actively recruited several employees dedicated, entirely or substantially, to the facility. As a result, and as correctly reflected in the Staff Report, since January 2017, the CCSD has complied fully with all RWQCD monitoring and reporting requirements relating to the facility.<sup>1</sup>

Based, at best, on an outdated under-assessment of CCSD staffing levels and unsupported accusations that the District cannot be trusted to comply with the proposed Order, some project opponents seek to overturn the Executive Officer's July 3, 2018 revised MRP that reduced groundwater monitoring and reporting requirements when the facility is non-operational. The project opponent's argument is a transparent and cynical attempt to increase unnecessarily the water facility's operating costs and render the facility less feasible and attractive. This meritless strategy, however, is not supported by the evidence or any facts and is in tension, if not conflict, with the Staff Report and the proposed updated Order.

One additional comment in response to the notion that the CCSD cannot be trusted to comply with the proposed Order. As stated in the Staff Report, groundwater in the CCSD's San Simeon basin well field and surface water in the San Simeon Creek Lagoon have been extensively monitored for many years. As a result of steps voluntarily taken by the CCSD, the quality of such groundwater and surface water has improved overall *since installation of the facility* and the levels of nitrates, specifically, have improved markedly. Contrary to the unfounded accusations of the project opponents, this is hardly the story of a water district that is either understaffed, incompetent or untrustworthy.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, the proposed Order and associated MRP are clear, comprehensive, reasonable and effective. The WDRs and WRRs, which are the product of extensive and

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<sup>1</sup> The project opponents may also seek to further delay adoption of the proposed Order because the CCSD General Manager position is currently vacant. That argument is hollow for, at least, two reasons: 1) the CCSD is actively recruiting for the GM position and it should be filled on a permanent basis soon; and, 2) the CCSD Acting GM and highly professional staff capably manage the facility and the District.

careful work by the RWQCB Staff in collaboration with the CCSD, safeguard Cambria's groundwater and surface water. I respectfully urge the Board to adopt the proposed Order in its entirety.

Very truly yours,

/s/

Mark Rochefort