



Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

November 27, 2018

Supervisor Luis Alejo, Chair
Monterey County Board of Supervisors
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Sent Via Electronic Mail

Valerie Ralph, Clerk of the Board
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Honorable Chair Alejo and Board of Supervisors,

LETTER IN SUPPORT OF MONTEREY COUNTY HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER RESOLUTION PROPOSED FOR CONSIDERATION AT DECEMBER 4, 2018 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING

The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Coast Water Board) is pleased to submit this letter to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors in strong support of the proposed resolution establishing county policy ***“that every human being in Monterey County has the right to safe, clean, affordable and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking and sanitary purposes and this right is extended to all residents of Monterey County including disadvantaged individuals and groups and communities in rural and urban areas.”***

The Monterey County Health Department Environmental Health Bureau (HDEHB) has been a leader in the implementation of county programs to regulate water systems to ensure safe drinking water. We applaud HDEHB’s commitment to share drinking water data and promote state programs to conduct free domestic well testing and provide free replacement drinking water to residents with contaminated wells. However, despite these significant efforts and coordination by government agencies and non-governmental organizations, disadvantaged rural and urban communities in Monterey County still face severe water contamination, infrastructure deficiencies, and financial barriers to sustainable solutions. County data indicate that 235 of the 1,296 Monterey County regulated water systems have exceeded safe drinking water standards for nitrate, arsenic, or fluoride. Central Coast Water Board data indicate that in some areas of Monterey County, more than 66 percent of the domestic wells tested exceeded the safe drinking water standard for nitrate (e.g., Forebay groundwater subbasin¹). Supervisor Alejo and

¹ https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board_info/agendas/2018/may/item8/item8_stfrpt.pdf

Supervisor Salinas have been strong proponents of programs to address these issues and ensure safe and affordable drinking water for all residents of Monterey County.

The proposed Human Right to Water resolution affirms this commitment and builds on the legacy of water law² and policy^{3,4} in California to address the most pressing water issues facing Monterey County's underserved communities. Furthermore, the proposed resolution will make Monterey County the first county in the state, and in the nation, to adopt county policy to explicitly recognize the human right to water and provides clear direction to staff and transparency to stakeholders regarding the value of the human right to water. It will take a sustained, coordinated effort to resolve the challenging drinking water issues in the Central Coast Region and we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed resolution and the opportunity to continue to work with county staff on its implementation. Recently, the Central Coast Water Board allocated funding to the Community Water Center⁵ to open a new office in Watsonville to support environmental justice and we encourage the county to utilize this new resource to help ensure that Central Coast communities have access to safe, clean, affordable and accessible drinking water.

Sincerely,

for, John M. Robertson, Executive Officer

cc:

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² Water Code section 106.3, enacted on September 25, 2012

³State Water Resources Control Board Resolution 2016-0010, adopted on February 16, 2016,
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/resolutions/2016/rs2016_0010.pdf

⁴ Central Coast Water Board Resolution No. R3-2017-0004, adopted on January 26, 2017,
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board_decisions/adopted_orders/2017/2017-0004_hrtw_fnl.pdf

⁵ <https://www.communitywatercenter.org/>