BEFORE THE
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In re Petition of Imperial Irrigation District and San Diego County Water Authority for Approval of Long-Term Transfer of Conserved Water and Changes in Point of Diversion, Place of Use and Purpose of Use Under Permit No. 7643

OUTLINE OF SUPPLEMENTAL EXPERT TESTIMONY OF DENNIS UNDERWOOD (FOR REBUTTAL CASE)

I am Dennis Underwood. I am a Vice President with The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California in Los Angeles. My Statement of Qualifications and Expert Witness Testimony was submitted previously as San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) Exhibit 4.

1. As previously set forth in its Policy Statement, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) has put aside its fundamental disagreement regarding the jurisdiction of the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) relative to transfers of Colorado River water in order to facilitate implementation of the California 4.4 Plan and in accordance with the provisions of the Protest Dismissal Agreement. I am appearing today pursuant to a subpoena issued by the SDCWA as one of their rebuttal witnesses.
2. I am aware of testimony and evidence previously submitted in this proceeding indicating that the conservation program, as presently described, may result in potentially unreasonable impacts on fish and wildlife. However, the fact is that not all conservation measures identified in the draft environmental review document (DEIR/DEIS) will cause these alleged impacts. Alternatively, there has been some testimony that the methods of conservation, such as fallowing, that would reduce impacts on fish and wildlife would cause significant socio-economic impacts in the Imperial Valley.¹

3. The purpose of my testimony today is to provide information that may be of assistance to the SWRCB in evaluating various approaches to the conservation of agricultural water that might be pursued by IID consistent with the DEIR/DEIS that would avoid impacts on the Salton Sea as well as the Imperial Valley. The information provided is based upon MWD’s experience in test fallowing programs with the Palo Verde Irrigation District (PVID).

4. MWD and PVID implemented a two-year test land fallowing program from August 1, 1992 through July 31, 1994.² The test involved 20,215 acres of farmland and saved approximately 186,000 acre-feet of Colorado River water over two years. The payment to the participating farmers was $620 per fallowed acre that equated to $135 per acre foot of water saved. In addition MWD paid the PVID an additional $500,000 for administrative costs bringing the total cost/acre-foot to $143.00.

A review of the economic issues related to the PVID program was set forth in a published study entitled “1994 Regional Economic Impacts of the Palo Verde Test Land Fallowing Program.”³ The principle findings of the study are as follows:

a. The program was not found to have affected overall regional economic performance to any significant degree.

b. The program was not found to have caused non-farm-related businesses in the

¹ See generally testimony and exhibits submitted by various environmental organizations; IID Exh. 65: Witness Testimony of Dr. Rodney Smith; County Exh. 1 and 1A: Witness Testimony of Jurg Heuberger; County Exh. 3 and 3A: Written Testimony of Steven Spickard.
³ PCL Exh. 31: M.Cubed for MWD, Regional Economic Impacts of the Palo Verde Test Land Fallowing Program (Dec, 1994)
region to reduce employment or lose revenue.

c. Negative economic impacts of the program concentrated on a few farm-related businesses providing services or supplies to the region’s farmers.

d. The program was found to be only one of several causes for reduced regional demand for farm-related labor, services and manufactured inputs.

e. Approximately 93% of program payments in excess of fallowing and maintenance costs were spent locally on farm-related improvements.

f. There was no measurable change in taxable sales, property taxes or construction activity in the region.

Based upon the success of the prior test program, PVID and MWD now propose to enter into a 35-year Land Management, Crop Rotation and Water Supply Program. ¹

The proposed program would provide MWD with up to 111,000 acre feet of conserved water per year. This is based upon a maximum of 26,500 program acres being taken out of irrigation in any period.

The non-irrigated lands would be rotated once every year up to once every five years, at the participating farmer’s option.

The crops most likely to be displaced by the program are hays and grains. Higher value crops such as vegetables and melons are less likely to be affected.

Land management measures to control weed growth and wind erosion would be an integral part of the proposed program and would be provided by the participating farmers. The erosion control program involves (1) reducing the effect of wind speeds at the soil surface and/or (2) increasing the resistance of soil particles to detachment. It is estimated that the program will result in PM10 levels similar to or slightly decreased from current levels.

Landowners will sign up for the entire term of the program. Depending on the number of participants, a maximum of 29% to 35% of a participant’s acreage is taken out of irrigation annually. The payment structure will involve both an initial sign-up and an annual payment. In addition there

will be payments to the PVID to cover both administrative costs and for community development projects.

5. It is MWD's belief that programs such as our past program with PVID as well as our proposed PVID program are beneficial to the farmers, the farming community and the urban partners. Such programs, if carefully crafted and operated to meet local concerns, have minimal environmental and socio-economic effects that can all be addressed through mitigation.

I declare under perjury pursuant to the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on May 24, 2002, at Los Angeles, California.

Dennis Underwood, Vice President,
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California