



May 25, 2022

Chino Basin Watermaster  
9641 San Bernardino Road  
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730

**Chino Basin Watermaster, Fiscal Year 2022/23 Draft Budget**

To Watermaster Board Members:

The cities of Ontario and Chino and Monte Vista Water District are following up on their letter of May 2, 2022, which questioned the inclusion of expenditures for Optimum Basin Management Program (OBMP) Update California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review in the 2022/23 Draft Budget. While we received written comments from Mr. Kavounas and spoke with Watermaster Counsel, which we appreciate, we have not received an explanation of the legal basis for such expenditures. We have been repeatedly told by Watermaster that CEQA review, and associated Watermaster expenditures, would follow an Implementation Plan and Agreement by the parties to the Peace Agreement. Similarly, Watermaster Counsel acknowledged, and we agree, that there is a need to revisit the “project” description in the pending Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA) CEQA analysis.

Accordingly, we hereby request a Written Legal Opinion from Watermaster Counsel that identifies both the CEQA “project” description and the provision(s) in the Chino Basin Judgment and/or Peace Agreements, and/or any other agreement among the parties to the Judgment, which authorizes such expenditures. We understand from recent communications with Watermaster Counsel that Watermaster is not a public agency but rather an extension of the Superior Court, and hence not authorized to conduct CEQA review. We agree with that statement and conclusion. However, that statement and conclusion suggest that CEQA review and associated expenditures require agreement by all parties to the Judgment – the procedure followed by the Peace Agreement.

It also appears that Watermaster intends to finance, by funding the CEQA consultants (Dodson and West Yost) and CEQA attorneys, the efforts of IEUA as the Lead CEQA agency when IEUA itself is a proponent of an OBMP project that requires Watermaster approval under the Judgment. This would appear to present a conflict of interest. We request that the Legal Opinion address this perceived conflict of interest.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter in the belief that you share our desire to ensure that all expenditures within the draft budget are legally justified.

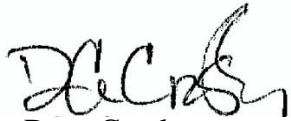
Sincerely,



Courtney Jones  
City of Ontario Water Resources and Regulatory Affairs Director



Justin Scott-Coe  
Monte Vista Water District General Manager



Dave Crosley  
City of Chino Utilities Engineering and Operations Manager

cc: Peter Kavounas, General Manager, Chino Basin Watermaster  
Eduardo Espinoza, Chair, Appropriative Pool Committee