

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 1, 2022

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Subject: Support for the Phase 2 Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion Project

Dear Secretary Haaland,

We write to urge you to ensure that permitting process delays do not defer much needed drought relief that will be provided by the broadly supported expansion of Los Vaqueros Reservoir. Los Vaqueros is ready to begin construction next year as the first storage project built with the \$1.7 billion in funding provided by the *Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act* and other appropriated funding for storage projects, but only if the remaining permitting issues are resolved in an expeditious manner.

The Phase 2 Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion Project (Project) would improve water supply reliability for more than 11 million urban residents and 750,000 acres of irrigated farmland in California. The Project also would provide federal benefits through increased water supply to wildlife refuges and improved operational flexibility of the Central Valley Project. In 2020, after at least six years of study, the Bureau of Reclamation found the project to be feasible. Since then, Congress has appropriated \$10 million to advance pre-construction activities and \$136 million for Project construction. However, in order to deploy this construction funding, consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the *Endangered Species Act* must be completed.

As you may know, the second draft of a Biological Assessment, addressing Reclamation's comments at the time, was provided to Reclamation on July 28, 2021, yet it still has not initiated consultation. The *Endangered Species Act* requires issuance of a final Biological Opinion within 135 days of initiation, and we urge you to expedite its completion. The State of California has conditionally awarded \$477 million for the Project, funding that could be in jeopardy if Interior fails to act.

We appreciate your partnership in implementing funding Congress has appropriated to mitigate the extreme drought that California is facing. Thank you for your consideration and please let us know if we can be of any assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



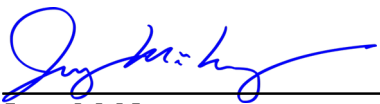
Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



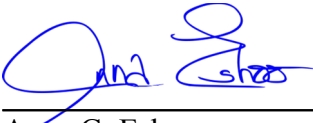
Josh Harder
Member of Congress



David G. Valadao
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



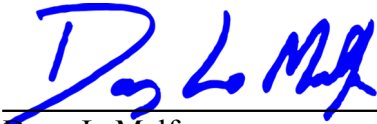
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



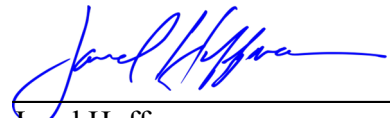
Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress