



January 23, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Ben Allen  
California State Senate  
1021 O Street, Room 6610  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Susan Eggman  
California State Senate  
1021 O Street, Room 8530  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Eduardo Garcia  
California State Assembly  
1021 O Street, Room 8120  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Carlos Villapudua  
California State Assembly  
1021 O Street, Room 6340  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Josh Becker  
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #2  
1021 O St., Ste. 7250  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Steve Bennett  
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #4  
1021 O St., Ste. 4710  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Dam Safety and Resilience Program / Legislative Bond Proposals**

Dear Governor Newsom, Bond Authors and Budget Subcommittee Chairs:

As members of the dam safety and climate resilience coalition, we are writing to urge the Administration and Legislature to maintain dam safety as a priority in budgetary and water and climate bond discussions in 2024.

This an important public safety issue that has been highlighted in the state and national media, including the attached New York Times' piece "The Trillion Dollar Question: What if California's Dams Fail?" (*available at [www.nytimes.com/2023/06/22/magazine/california-dams.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/22/magazine/california-dams.html)*). Additionally, funding for dam safety projects will provide significant job opportunities throughout the state.

Specifically, we are writing to:

- 1) Express our continued support for the "Dam Safety and Enhancements Grant Program" and statutory language as established last year, as well as update decision makers on progress on current implementation.
- 2) Comment on the Governor's proposed Fiscal Year 2024-'25 cut from \$100 million to \$50 million for the "starter" funding for the program.
- 3) Express our continued gratitude for the inclusion of dam safety program funding in all four of the current water, flood and climate resilience bonds currently under consideration by the Legislature and urge substantial funding in any final water and climate resilience bond for the November 2024 ballot.

Please find additional detail on these topics below:

### **Newly Established "Dam Safety and Enhancements Grant Program" and Proposed General Fund Reduction for Initial Funding Allocation**

As you may recall, last year's SB 122, Section 35 (as attached) established California's first-ever dam safety funding program. We are grateful for this well-crafted language and are generally encouraged by the Department of Water Resources' ongoing work to establish program guidelines and allocate currently available funding.

As individual organizations, we will continue to engage in this process and strongly believe that this program should be fortified with substantial additional funding to make a real impact in the multibillion challenge facing dams throughout California.

The Governor's January 10 budget proposal includes a proposed cut from \$100 million to \$50 million, and we appreciate the state's current budget challenges - yet we would urge consideration of a restoration of the full initial funding to the greatest extent possible, especially if economic conditions improve relative to current estimates.

Beyond the level of initial general fund monies available, we continue, as detailed below, to strongly urge inclusion of substantial monies for this purpose in any final water and climate bond forged in 2024.

### **Maintaining Dam Safety Funding as a Priority in Water and Climate Bond Discussion:**

We are grateful to note that the current range for dam safety and related climate resilience funding among the bond proposals is from \$400 million to a welcome \$1 billion. We continue to maintain our request that at least \$850 million be included in any final bond agreement.

Additionally, we wish to speak to our interest in ensuring that final bond language sufficiently captures all necessary elements of a dam safety and climate resilience program needed to address the paramount priority of public safety and to support important benefits related to dam safety improvements.

**Specifically, the language in the Fiscal Year 2023-'24 budget package (SB 122, Section 35 - as attached) that established the program addresses these needs, and we urge that a final bond refer to this well-crafted language.**

Again, we are grateful to all current bond authors for the inclusion of dam safety as a significant funding category and will continue to highlight this issue as discussions build toward a bond agreement.

### **Reiterating the Need for Substantial Program Funding - The Background:**

For your convenience, we are providing key, previously distributed background information about the significant need for dam safety and enhancements funding.

Overall, to our knowledge, there is no comprehensive total for the statewide need for dam safety and resilience projects, but the information that does exist easily suggests the need is in the multiple billions of dollars.

For example, the Department of Water Resources has conducted an analysis for just a small subset of the 1,240 jurisdictional-sized dams that fall under the Division of the Safety of Dams' oversight. For 76 of the 88 less-than-satisfactory dams with high or extremely high downstream hazard classification, repair costs are estimated to exceed \$2 billion.

Additionally, just a few examples of dam safety and resilience project costs totaling roughly \$3.7 billion suggest a multi-billion state need for funding. These few examples include:

- Santa Clara County - Anderson Dam - \$2.3 billion
- Yuba County - Atmospheric River Control Spillway at New Bullards Bar Dam - \$240 million
- San Luis Obispo County and Monterey County - San Antonio and Nacimiento Dams Repair/Rehabilitation - \$192.5 million.
- San Diego County - Lake Hodge Dam Repair/Rehabilitation - \$275-300 million
- Ventura County - Santa Felicia Dam Public Safety Improvement Project - \$198 million
- Sacramento County Flood Control Agency - Union Valley Reservoir and Hell Hole Reservoir release facilities - \$400 million
- Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District - Lee Lake Dam - \$60 million
- El Dorado Irrigation District - Silver Lake Dam - \$50 million

For more background information, please find the attached fact sheet from the Association of California Water Agencies, California Municipal Utilities Association and California Alliance for Jobs.

**As you are aware, the 2023 hydrological year served as a stunning reminder of why substantial funding for such a program is critically important. Whether providing funds to restore existing dam storage capacity to capture atmospheric river-driven storm flows or better protect communities from flooding risks and/or dam failure, recent conditions have proven the great need to bolster California's aging dam infrastructure.**

We offer this information to the Governor, all of the bond authors and relevant budget subcommittees and policy committees as we seek to continue to engage in the finalization of a dam safety and resilience funding component of a bond to be considered by the voters.

Sincerely,

**Cindy Tuck, Deputy Executive Director  
Association of California Water Agencies**

**Danielle Blacet-Hyden, Deputy Executive Director  
California Municipal Utilities Association**

**Michael Quigley, Executive Director  
California Alliance for Jobs**

**Paul A. Cook, General Manager  
Irvine Ranch Water District**

**Dan Denham, General Manager  
San Diego County Water Authority**

**Carlos Quintero, General Manager  
Sweetwater Authority**

**Willie Whittlesey, General Manager  
Yuba Water Agency**

**Greg Thomas, General Manager  
Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District**

**Jim Abercrombie, General Manager  
El Dorado Irrigation District**

**Mauricio Guardado, General Manager  
United Water Conservation District**

**Grant Davis, General Manager  
Sonoma Water**

**David Guy, President  
Northern California Water Association**

**Jerry Vilander, General Manager  
Serrano Water District**

**Glenn Church, Chair  
Monterey County Board of Supervisors**

**Ara Azhderian, General Manager  
Monterey County Water Resources Agency**

**Adrian Granda, Director, Department of Government Affairs  
City of San Diego, Office of Mayor Todd Gloria**

**Michelle Reimers, General Manager  
Turlock Irrigation District**

**Jane Cirrincione, Assistant General Manager, Legislative & Regulatory Affairs  
Northern California Power Agency**

**Rick L. Callender, Esq., Chief Executive Officer  
Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water)**

**Richard M. Johnson, Executive Director  
Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency**

**cc: Kip Lipper, Chief Policy Advisor, Senate President pro Tempore Toni Atkins  
Joanne Roy, Consultant, Senate Budget Subcommittee #2  
Katharine Moore, Chief Consultant, Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee  
Genevieve Wong, Principal Consultant, Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee  
Keith Cialino, Policy Consultant, Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas  
Shy Forbes, Consultant, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #4  
Pablo Garza, Chief Consultant, Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee  
Todd Moffitt, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus  
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