

County of Monterey



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October 6, 2023

Jason Demers
Senior Engineer
Monterey County Water Resources Agency
P.O. Box 930
Salinas, CA 93902

Re: Support for the Monterey County Water Resources Agency's Enhancing Predictive Tools and Operational Strategies for the Nacimiento and San Antonio Dams and Reservoirs Project: WaterSMART Applied Science Grant for FY 2023

Dear Mr. Demers:

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors for the County of Monterey, I am pleased to convey our support for the grant proposal by the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) for Enhancing Predictive Tools and Operational Strategies for the Nacimiento and San Antonio Dams and Reservoirs. We strongly support this effort to develop decision support tools and operational strategies with the goal of enhancing water storage and flood control operations at Nacimiento and San Antonio Reservoirs.

MCWRA is proposing to develop Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO) based operational tools. These tools will fully utilize the best available forecasting provided by the California Nevada River Forecast Center (CNRFC) using the Hydrologic Ensemble Forecast Service (HEFS) to develop a coordinated forecast and operations approach for Nacimiento and San Antonio Reservoirs. FIRO is a reservoir operations strategy that incorporates enhanced watershed monitoring and forecasting to help operators make more informed water storage and release decisions. This strategy is especially valuable in places like California where our already highly variable weather is expected to be further impacted by our changing climate.


FIRO has been successfully implemented, or is in development, at several dams and reservoirs operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the California Department of Water Resources, and other agencies. FIRO projects include Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma in the Russian River watershed, Prado and Seven Oaks Dams in the Santa Ana River watershed, New Bullards Bar Reservoir and Lake Oroville in the Yuba-Feather River system, and Howard Hanson Dam on the Green River in Washington.

Development of FIRO based decision support tools for Nacimiento and San Antonio Reservoirs would support the goal of MCWRA water managers and dam operators to safely maximize storage of winter inflows while minimizing downstream flooding risks. Maximizing the amount of stored water in the reservoirs increases the amount of water that could be available when needed to support groundwater recharge in the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin, which benefits disadvantaged communities along the

Salinas River and provides resources for fish and wildlife habitat and migration, including for the threatened South-Central California Coast Steelhead. An increase in available water for diversion at the Salinas River Diversion Facility could decrease groundwater pumping in the coastal portion of the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin that is impaired by seawater intrusion, in turn slowing the advance of seawater intrusion which impairs the drinking water supplies of the disadvantaged communities around Salinas and Castroville.

We strongly support the effort of MCWRA to develop enhanced prediction tools and operational strategies to support their ongoing flood control and water conservation operations with improved safety and efficiency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Luis A. Alejo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "A".

LUIS A. ALEJO
Chair, Monterey County Board of Supervisors