

County of Monterey



Board of Supervisors

LUIS A. ALEJO, *Chair, District 1*
GLENN CHURCH, *Vice Chair, District 2*
CHRIS M. LOPEZ, *District 3*
WENDY ROOT ASKEW, *District 4*
MARY L. ADAMS, *District 5*

October 6, 2023

Amy Woodrow
Senior Hydrologist
Monterey County Water Resources Agency
P.O. Box 930
Salinas, CA 93902

Re: Support for the Monterey County Water Resources Agency's Nacimiento and San Antonio Watersheds Weather Modification Project: WaterSMART Planning and Project Design Grant for FY 2023

Dear Ms. Woodrow,

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors for the County of Monterey, I am pleased to support the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) proposal for the Nacimiento and San Antonio Watersheds Weather Modification Project (NSW-WMP). We strongly support this effort to scientifically evaluate the potential for additional water sources and engage with the community in pursuit of solutions to the continued challenges of drought conditions and water supply issues.

MCWRA is proposing to conduct public engagement along with hydrologic and environmental analyses to review options for a weather modification project. The purpose of a weather modification project is to augment natural precipitation in the watersheds that drain into Nacimiento Reservoir and San Antonio Reservoir to provide additional inflow to both reservoirs.

Every ten years, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) publishes U.S. Climate Normals which are a 30-year average of conditions, including temperature and precipitation, that can help demonstrate changes in climate over time. The most recent data, which covers a 30-year period from 1990 to 2020, shows much warmer than average temperatures for the western United States and a 5-10% in average annual precipitation when compared to the 20th century average.

Despite events in January 2023 that brought large quantities of precipitation to Monterey County, the area has experienced multiple consecutive dry years in the recent past. A weather modification program could allow MCWRA to maximize precipitation from storms when they do occur and increase the amount of inflow to Nacimiento and San Antonio Reservoirs, allowing for storage of water that can be sustainably managed during times of drought.

Based on a preliminary feasibility study, a 5-month long cloud seeding program in the target area could yield an additional 9% to 17% increase in precipitation for the two watersheds. The proposed NSW-WMP

would include refinement of the hydrologic analysis in the preliminary feasibility study, an environmental analysis of a proposed project, evaluation of alternative solutions, and a public outreach and engagement campaign.

A weather modification project resulting from the proposed NSW-WMP could have a direct positive effect throughout the Salinas Valley in Monterey County and the northern area of San Luis Obispo County. 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.

The NSW-WMP project will identify and engage stakeholders, evaluate costs of and alternatives to a weather modification project, and accomplish multiple technical and environmental scoping and planning activities. We fully support this effort and look forward to participating and providing the County's perspective while exploring a weather modification project and the resulting Water Strategy document.

Sincerely,



LUIS A. ALEJO
Chair, Monterey County Board of Supervisors