



November 30, 2020

Keene Simonds, Executive Director
San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission
9335 Hazard Way, Suite 200
San Diego, CA 92123

Dear Keene;

We have been advised that LAFCO will be considering the Municipal Service Review for Resource Conservation Districts at its December 7th Commission Meeting. We also understand that LAFCO may be evaluating a recommendation for some sort of re-organization affecting the Mission Resource Conservation District (MRCD) and the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego.

As independent special districts, we recognize LAFCO's mission of, and expertise in, evaluating how critical public services are to be delivered efficiently and effectively. As client public water agencies, we also recognize the vital role the Mission Resource Conservation District has played in sustaining and enhancing agriculture and water body/watershed protection in North San Diego County. Here are just a few examples:

- In 1992, with agriculture struggling to deal with the devastating impacts of the '90-'91 drought cutbacks and rising water costs, the San Diego County Water Authority and MRCD entered into contracts to provide Irrigation Water Use Efficiency Evaluations and other technical assistance to both Agriculture and Landscape customers within the CWA service area. Work done outside of MRCD territory is done under MOU with nearby RCD's.
- That very effective and critical relationship between wholesale/retail water agencies has been maintained continuously for almost 30 years to the great benefit of San Diego County Agriculture.
- More recently, in partnership with Valley Center, Rainbow, Carlsbad, and Rincon del Diablo Municipal Water Districts, Fallbrook Public Utility District, San Dieguito and Vallecitos Water Districts, the City of Escondido, the City of Oceanside, and SDCWA, the MRCD secured a \$1.5M Regional Conservation Partnership Program Grant from the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to assist local growers addressing water and soil resource conservation concerns on their farms. Through this program, growers have been able to upgrade their irrigation systems for greater irrigation efficiency and address issues with runoff and erosion for greater soil and watershed health.
- Over the past 5 years, MRCD has worked with 2,500 property owners in both the Landscape and Agriculture sectors to improve water use efficiency in irrigation and eliminate irrigation run-off into storm drains, water courses and ultimately, the Pacific Ocean.

We can easily state that the cooperative efforts, specialized expertise, and successful track record of the MRCD have played a large role in preserving San Diego County's agricultural heritage and economy, as well as protecting watersheds and local surface and groundwater water quality. Further, we can state that the MRCD is well known and well regarded in the communities which benefitted from its services, which is a key factor.

To quote from the *RCD's Guide Book for Collaboration and Consolidation*:

"RCD's relationships with the communities they serve and the credibility and trust they built with those communities, are essential to their ability to do their work. Trust is built on a track record of accomplishments, successful projects, and satisfied landowners."

As LAFCO considers its recommendations concerning the potential re-organization of resource conservation districts in San Diego County, in our view, the issue should be ***much more*** about the effectiveness of services being provided by the MRCD to agriculture and water quality protection in our region, than about the number of RCDs. LAFCO might also consider that MRCD does not provide services in the traditional sense one thinks of with special districts, such as water, wastewater, fire protection, etc. What the MRCD does provide is effective, knowledge-based service or intellectual property which is put to effective use to the overall benefit of the region, irrespective of where the MRCD boundaries lie.

A possible solution would be to expand the boundaries of the MRCD southerly to the northern boundary of the city of San Diego. This boundary adjustment would allow the MRCD to encompass the areas hosting 95% of the County's commercial agriculture traditionally benefitting from its services. Even though this would not result in the reduction of special districts, three RCDs for a diverse San Diego County, which is the eighth largest out of California's 58 counties, covering 4,526 square miles, does not seem unreasonable.

Whatever LAFCO determines in regards to re-organization of the region's Resource Conservation Districts, there needs to be specific provisions in the LAFCO decision which guarantee preservation of the scope and effectiveness of the Mission Resource Conservation District's long-standing, specialized and critical services to the San Diego Region for the preservation of commercial agriculture, watershed protection and water quality.

Respectfully submitted by the undersigned San Diego County client public water agencies and partners with the MRCD;



Sandra Kerl, General Manager, SDCWA



Jack Bebee, General Manager, Fallbrook Public Utility District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Kennedy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Tom Kennedy, General Manager, Rainbow Municipal Water District

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cliff Baze". The signature is cursive and stylized.

Cliff Baze, General Manager, Rincon del Diablo Municipal Water District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Arant". The signature is very stylized and abstract, consisting of a few thick, sweeping strokes.

Gary Arant, General Manager, Valley Center Municipal Water District