

## **WE Watch Position on Assignment of SWP Contract to CCWA (3/12/20)**

**Background:** Since CA's DWR began to provide State Water Project water in Santa Barbara County in the 1990's, the County's Flood Control and Water Conservation District has been DWR's SWP contract holder. The County's role is primarily as a guarantor that DWR will be paid if a Central Coast Water Authority member fails to meet its fiduciary responsibilities for the SWP. CCWA handles all other aspects of SWP water provision within the County.

**Current Issue:** CCWA members have proposed that DWR assign the SWP contract to CCWA. **WE Watch believes the contract should remain with SB County for the following 5 reasons.**

1. **To Ensure Oversight by Elected Officials Representing All County Residents.**

All SB County residents deserve to have a representative involved in oversight of the SWP in the County, and the BOS is the only entity that can fulfill this role. Even residents of County areas that are not represented at CCWA (e.g., Lompoc or some unincorporated areas in the Santa Ynez Valley) need to have their County Supervisor involved in SWP issues because the availability of SWP water affects even those County residents who don't directly receive it. *[For example, the extent to which water providers in north and south County do or don't take SWP water in any year influences: Cachuma levels, Cachuma water releases, SY River flow, and recharge of groundwater in areas not represented at CCWA.]* Having the CCWA Director continue to report periodically to the BOS is in the public interest; and it won't be required or meaningful if the SWP contract is assigned to CCWA.

2. **To Provide a Broader Perspective on Water Management than CCWA Can Provide.**

As the 2017 SB County grand jury report stated, the County should be the lead on water issues in the County. While CCWA sees imported water only as a commodity to be supplied to purchasers, the County agencies and the BOS can provide a broader perspective that considers the inter-relationships between surface water, groundwater, and imported water, along with water's economic, social, and ecological impacts. Just as the SB County Water Agency is the master contractor to USBR for the Cachuma Project, and as SBCWA staff play a key coordinating role in groundwater management under the SGMA, the County should remain the SWP contract holder in order for staff to stay involved with imported water.

3. **To Promote Transparency and Accountability in Decision-Making**

The best level of government decision-making is often the one that is most transparent, accessible, and accountable. The County is relatively better at these factors than is CCWA which has almost no public outreach or involvement in its meetings or decision-making. Moreover, even now with CCWA members' votes being based on SWP water allocations, the City of Santa Maria and another member could constitute over 50% of the total vote, thereby allowing only 2 water agencies to decide important issues that affect all SWP users. If the County at least retains its role as SWP contract holder, then the BOS provides one level of government looking out for the interests of, and being accountable to, all residents.

**4. To Retain Fiduciary Responsibility**

DWR has not agreed in writing that the County would no longer be financially obligated if the contract were assigned to CCWA. Even if DWR could provide such assurance, the County should continue to have this fiduciary role on behalf of County residents from Guadalupe to Carpinteria who receive SWP water, as well as on behalf of all County residents who could be affected if a CCWA member fails to meet its financial obligations.

**5. To Maintain Effective Inter-Governmental Relationships**

The inter-governmental relationships in Santa Barbara County seem to be working fairly well for the purpose of providing SWP water. The current contract holder role ain't broke; sodon't change it.