

ATTACHMENT D



Mr. Steve Brandau

Chairman, Fresno County Local Agency Formation Commission

2607 Fresno Street Suite B

Fresno, CA 93621

Received

AUG 02 2021

Fresno LAFCo

SUBJECT: PROPOSED EXPANSION OF SIERRA RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Chairman Brandau,

This letter is written on behalf of Alta Irrigation District, Consolidated Irrigation District, Fresno Irrigation District and Central Kings Groundwater Sustainability Agency (Agencies). For reasons outlined below, the Agencies wish to express their opposition to the proposed expansion of the Sierra Resource Conservation District (SRCD).

Review of SRCD's enabling legislation and its Municipal Service Review reveal that SRCD's authority and stated goals include the following:

- Protection of water quality
- Water reclamation
- Development of storage and distribution of water
- Water use management
- Water conservation
- Authority to levy assessments

Statutory authority to undertake these activities is currently held and implemented by the objecting Agencies within their individual boundaries. The request by SRCD to expand its boundary to overlap the Agencies would therefore result in the duplication of authority by separate local agencies under the direction of separate Boards of Directors. Of concern to the Agencies is the fact that overlapping authority will likely lead to conflict and/or allow undue interference and/or confusion in how each of the Agencies conduct their business while complying with the objecting agencies historic statutory oversight of the same topics that the SRCD is proposing to assume involvement. This concern is heightened when noting that SRCD has no expertise in the listed common activities and the SRCD Board is comprised of members who reside only in the Fresno County foothills.

In a meeting with the SRCD District Manager, these and other issues were raised. The general response was that SRCD does not intend to do much water management and wants to work with the local agencies and SRCD's intended main purpose is to funnel grant money into local projects. However, there was no mention of limiting SRCD's authority and stated goals to just grant applications in the LAFCo staff report.

Discussion in the meeting revealed that SRCD did not need to expand its boundary to provide funding and other proposed benefits to the proposed expansion area. SRCD can work outside its existing boundary by means of cooperative agreement(s) with other agencies. This is current and common practice now among

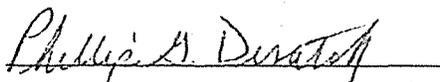
agencies and these Agencies, and does not require another layer of unwanted and unnecessary oversight as the expansion of SRCD's boundaries portend. In fact, the SRCD Manager stated that the only reason SRCD was expanding its boundary was because the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) suggested it be done to eliminate uncovered areas within the State.

The ability of Resource Conservation Districts to work outside their boundary was confirmed by the General Manager of the Kings River Conservation District (KRCD) (also in attendance) who indicated that KRCD has worked cooperatively with other Resource Conservation Districts to accomplish mutual goals outside the boundaries of the Resource Conservation District.

SRCD is proposing a westward expansion to State Highway 99. At the time of the SRCD application to LAFCo, the Tranquillity Resource Conservation District (TRCD) was also proposing expansion to State Highway 99 from the west. This would have resulted in complete coverage of the area by a Resource Conservation District consistent with the desire of the CARCD as stated by the SRCD Manager. However, TRCD amended its proposed expansion to avoid overlap with the Agencies, who also opposed that expansion. The amended application was approved by LAFCo at a recent meeting. Therefore, there is no longer a reason to expand SRCD's boundaries to State Highway 99 based on a perceived need to provide full area coverage. In fact, the avoidance of unwanted duplicative overlap on the part of TRCD should be acknowledged as the preferred approach in addressing Resource Conservation District requests for expansion.

In summary, the signatory Agencies oppose expansion of the SRCD, because it will result in overlapping water management-related authority in an area of Fresno County already covered by water agencies with long-standing histories of surface and groundwater management. It can be shown that the SRCD has no water management-related expertise or experience and that the SRCD's stated goals can be accomplished without the proposed expansion. Despite the best intentions of the current SRCD Manager and Board of Directors, adding another layer of government in the form of an entity with no water management expertise is unwarranted and could lead to potential conflict. When pressed to withdraw the SRCD application based on the reasons outlined herein and in consideration of the fact that focus of bringing grant funding to the area can be accomplished without expanding the SRCD boundary, the SRCD Manager refused. LAFCo's mandate is to eliminate unnecessary jurisdictional layering and levels of oversight, not to promote it. We respectfully call upon LAFCo to recognize our concerns and avoid the unnecessary establishment of overlapping and duplicative authorities that would result in approval of the SRCD proposed expansion. The Agencies request that LAFCo deny SRCD's proposed annexation.

Sincerely



Phillip G. Desatoff

Consolidated Irrigation District

Central Kings Groundwater Sustainability Agency



William Stretch

Fresno Irrigation District



Chad Wegley

Alta Irrigation District