



The Honorable Edmund G. Brown Jr.
 Governor of California
 State Capitol, First Floor
 Sacramento, CA 95814

John Laird, Secretary
 California Natural Resources Agency
 1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown & Secretary Laird:

We are a coalition of community groups, local governments and agencies, businesses, labor, and individuals who have been affected by the recent Oroville Dam crisis.

The State, in partnership with local agencies, has greatly improved public safety downstream of Oroville Dam through the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars in levee repairs and other flood management measures--this investment has proven to be effective and timely in light of recent high water events. Oroville Dam itself plays a critical role in metering flood flow on the Feather River. However, while we are cognizant and appreciative of the many flood control benefits of Oroville Dam, we are greatly concerned by the physical constraints and operational decisions that have negatively impacted our downstream communities.

Oroville was built with the anticipation of Marysville Dam providing an additional flood control buffer that was never realized. In the last fifty years, atmospheric rivers occurring when there is a large snowpack have fueled large inflows into the dam requiring large discharges from the spillway. Climate change has made this worse. Levee failures, flood fights, emergency evacuations and loss of life and property during high water events in 1986,1997 and 2017 have all been borne by our residents who live and work immediately

downstream of Oroville Dam. This latest ongoing incident dramatically highlights the fact that those who suffer the greatest consequences from dam malfunction or failure have little or no say in the construction, operation or maintenance of that structure.

Oroville spillway conditions negatively affect our communities downstream, communities that are composed of low-income, minority and economically depressed constituencies. In the City of Oroville for example, 24% of the population lives in poverty. Just downstream in Marysville, the poverty rate is nearly 29%. The benefits of the Oroville Dam project are significant throughout the state, providing water to 24 million people in California. But the extreme danger and burden of flood water is shouldered by our disadvantaged communities alone. We view this as a social, economic and environmental justice issue that must be addressed.

Accordingly we have the following requests and questions:

1. This emergency has demonstrated that the Oroville Dam lacks the operational flexibility and reliability to provide adequate flood protection to communities downstream. It is not clear how DWR is adapting both the dam itself and/or reservoir operations to accommodate these deficiencies. We believe options need to be explored to provide for large releases well in advance of high water events and well below the service spillway crest elevation. Or, overall flood protection could be improved by providing additional flood buffer when there is a large snowpack and the potential for warm storms.

2. DWR's outreach to the downstream communities directly impacted has been inadequate at best. Our best sources of information have been informal and indirect sources rather than through official DWR channels. DWR must immediately shift its thinking in how, when, and to whom it shares information. There is already a strong community distrust of DWR due to this event. A lack of communication and transparency only makes it worse. DWR could do much more to improve trust and credibility with the community by providing greater transparency and providing formal, consistent communication with the downstream communities.

3. Design and construction of the necessary repairs to the dam and related infrastructure must be paramount and other considerations must be secondary. The number one priority must be to protect the lives of 200,000 people living immediately downstream. To be abundantly clear: fisheries protection, water supply issues, State Water Contractor priorities, FEMA reimbursement, politics and other issues must take a distant backseat to public safety. We urge DWR to publicly acknowledge this priority.

4. The overall infrastructure of the dam is old and, in the case of the spillways, river valves and turbines, failing. There must be a longer term plan for ensuring that Oroville Dam and all appurtenant features are repaired and brought up to 21st century standards. This plan should include not only the gated spillway and the emergency spillway, but also ensuring the plant facilities and low level release valves are adequate and fully operational. All construction plans should be reviewed by independent experts to ensure that this infrastructure is well planned, soundly built and supported. This modernization should be paid by the owners of the project, which we understand to be the State Water Contractors.

5. There must be a full and thorough review of how the Department of Water Resources designed, constructed, operated and maintained the dam. This review should include not only the existing, independent consulting board review and regulatory review, but also legislative oversight hearings and reviews by the State Auditor. Full disclosure and transparency of these proceedings and documents is essential.

6. There must be a public discussion as to how Oroville Dam should be operated in the future and who should operate it. Without prejudging the conversation, some of the questions are as follows:

- a. Should DWR continue to be the operator of Oroville Dam? There are other alternatives and they should be analyzed and discussed.

b. Should the Division of Dam Safety remain under the Department of Water Resources or should it become an independent body or moved to another agency to avoid perceived conflicts? Many of the most important technical regulators in the State serve under a publicly accountable board—DSOD should be no different.

c. Are the current inspections, maintenance, repair, and replacement activities associated with the infrastructure at the dam sufficient to provide for public safety?

d. How can we ensure more local input on Dam operations?

e. Should there be a more robust public safety obligation on the part of DWR to provide for law enforcement and emergency response at the Oroville Dam and Reservoir? As of now this obligation is largely shouldered by Butte County which has limited resources. FERC and DWR need to treat Butte County fairly for all the services provided to Lake Oroville facilities.

f. Should the operations at Oroville Dam be modified to provide for increased flood space during seasons in which there is a large snowpack?

g. How has DWR's coordinated reservoir operations and predictive forecasted reservoir operations benefitted our communities? How could these tools be better utilized? Forecasting during this crisis has been significantly inaccurate.

7. Improving Flood Protection Downstream:

a. There are several constrictions of the Feather River downstream that could be improved to better contain flood flows from the spillway. A cost-benefit study should be conducted to analyze projects that might alleviate these constrictions.

b. There are also several critical repair sites along the Feather River levee system that should be improved in order to better contain future flood flows from the spillway, including but not limited to sites in District 10, south of Yuba City, and south of Nicolaus. These were the sites of significant seepage during the recent crisis.


c. We have also seen large-scale erosion of the river banks as a result of quick draw downs of the spillway in the aftermath of the crisis. This erosion could ultimately threaten levees and, combined with the debris from the spillway collapse, has contributed to significant debris in the river channel. The debris impact to the carrying capacity of downstream levees must be analyzed/measured and removal/mitigation measures must be taken to protect property, lives, and the ecology and fish habitat of the Feather River.

8. As a result of the crisis and evacuation, there were business and property losses, lost wages, and damages to public and private property. These damages are harder to take for communities that are already struggling and families that are already living paycheck to paycheck. Emergency relief dollars may provide some compensation for these losses but it will not be complete. We would like to see some discussion as to how these gaps can be covered to help make our communities whole.

The undersigned jurisdictions and organizations would appreciate a response to each of the concerns and questions outlined above. Additionally, we formally request that our coalition be briefed and consulted as conditions change, recovery plans are being crafted and other critical short and long-term issues are being discussed. As an initial matter we would like to have a briefing from the technical staff (not PR staff) tasked with design and construction of spillways fixes that are scheduled to be completed before November 1st.

While we are resolute in pursuing our demands, we appreciate that DWR faces tremendous challenges, and we stand ready to collaborate with DWR to successfully complete necessary construction before next flood season.

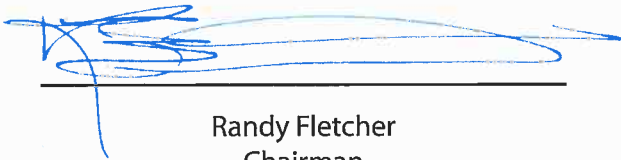
We look forward to an ongoing discussion with you.



James Gallagher
State Assemblyman
Third District



Bill Connelly
Chairman
Butte County Board of Supervisors



Randy Fletcher
Chairman
Yuba County Board of Supervisors



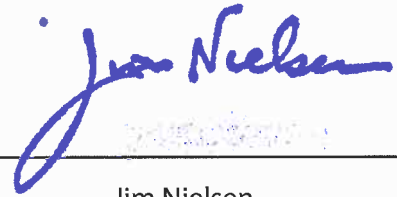
Stan Cleveland
Mayor
City of Yuba City



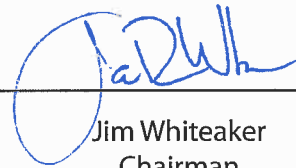
Angela Thompson
Mayor
City of Biggs



Frank Hall
Mayor
City of Gridley



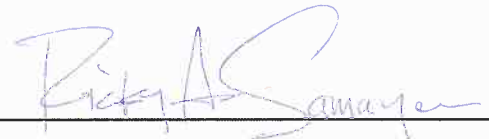
Jim Nielsen
State Senator
Forth District



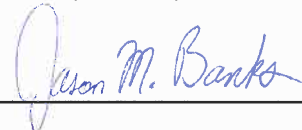
Jim Whiteaker
Chairman
Sutter County Board of Supervisors



Linda Dahlmeier
Mayor
City of Oroville



Ricky Samayoa
Mayor
City of Marysville



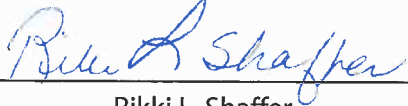
Jason Banks
Mayor
City of Live Oak



Rick West
Mayor
City of Wheatland



Sean Morgan
Mayor
City of Chico



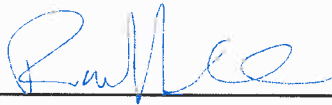
Rikki L. Shaffer
CEO
Yuba-Sutter Chamber of Commerce



Annette Bertolini
President
Live Oak District Chamber of Commerce



David Burroughs
President
Yuba-Sutter Farm Bureau



Randy Chapman
President
Oroville Association of Realtors



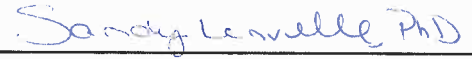
Brynda Stranix
President/Chief Operating Officer
Yuba-Sutter Economic Development Corporation



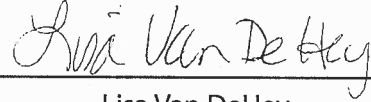
Sam Escherman
President
Yuba City Police Officer's Association



Francisco Reveles, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Yuba County Office of Education



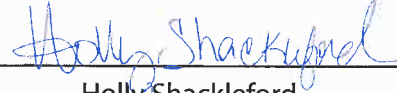
Sandy Linville
President & CEO
Oroville Area Chamber of Commerce



Lisa Van DeHey
Board Member
Gridley Area Chamber of Commerce



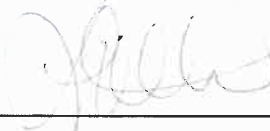
Clark Becker
President
Butte County Farm Bureau



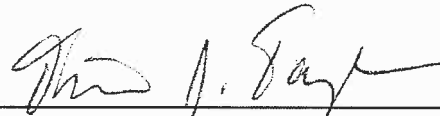
Holly Shackelford
President
Sutter Yuba Association of Realtors



Brendon Flynn
President
Sacramento Valley Landowners Association




Lester E. Eaton
President
Sutter Deputy Sheriff Association



Tim Taylor
Superintendent of Schools
Butte County Office of Education



Dr. Baljinder Dhillon
Superintendent of Schools
Sutter County Office of Education



Ron Roman
District Representative
Operating Engineers Local #3



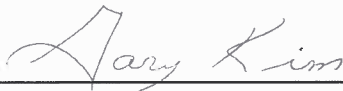
Robert D. Ward
Business Manager
IBEW L.U. 340



Gino Patrizio
Chief Executive Officer
Rideout Health



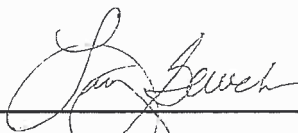
Robert Bateman
President
Roplast Industries Inc.



Gary Kim
President
Twin Cities Rod & Gun Club



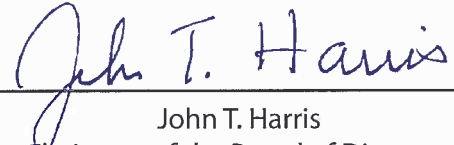
John Cassidy
Chief Executive Officer
Sierra Central Credit Union



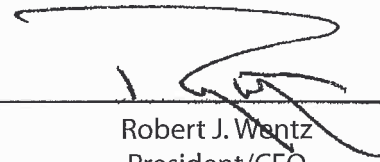
Larry Geweke
President/CEO
Geweke Ford Kia



Mark Mulliner
Business Manager
United Association Local Union 228
Plumbers, Pipefitters, HVAC



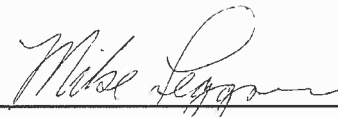
John T. Harris
Chairman of the Board of Directors
Orchard Hospital



Robert J. Wentz
President/CEO
Oroville Hospital



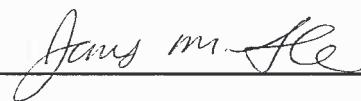
Robert Scheiber
President
Reclamation District 1001



Mike Leggins
Vice President & General Manager
Recology



Alex Bumpus
President/CEO
Bi-County Ambulance



James Stone
President
Nor-Cal Guides & Sportsmans Association