Santa Clara Valley Water District

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Ms. Mary Scruggs
Senior Engineering Hydrologist
Regional Planning Branch
California Department of Water Resources
901 P Street, Room 213
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Sacramento, CA 94236

Dear Ms. Scruggs:

Subject: Comments on DWR Draft CASGEM Procedures and Guidelines Documents

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring Program (CASGEM) Procedures and Guidelines documents.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District (District) is the local groundwater management agency in Santa Clara County, formed by the California Legislature adopting the District Act as an appendix to the California Water Code. The mission of the District is a healthy, safe, and enhanced quality of living in Santa Clara County through watershed stewardship and comprehensive management of water resources in a practical, cost-effective, and environmentally sensitive manner for current and future generations.

SBX7-6 amended the water code to mandate groundwater elevation monitoring throughout California under the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). DWR has named this program CASGEM. Thursday November 4th, DWR released for public input two draft documents related to the implementation of CASGEM: The Procedures for Monitoring Entity Reporting (Procedures) and Groundwater Elevation Monitoring Guidelines (Guidelines). This letter transmits the District's comments on the draft documents. Recommended additions are shown in *italics*, while recommended deletions are shown with strikeout:

- Procedures page 14. The second paragraph under Data Gaps implies that agencies could lose eligibility for grants and loans if DWR finds their monitoring plan inadequate due to insufficient density of monitoring wells to allow determination of seasonal and long-term trends in groundwater levels: "If no local entity is able and/or willing to fill a data gap … local agencies and the county … would be potentially ineligible for a water grant or loan awarded or administered by the state." This is contrary to the language in the law, Section 10931(b)(2): "The department may not require additional monitoring wells unless funds are provided for that purpose." What the law does state is the following: "Section 10933.7(a) If the department is required to perform groundwater monitoring functions pursuant to Section 10933.5, the county and the entities described in subdivisions (a) to (d), inclusive, of Section 10927 shall not be eligible for a water grant or loan awarded or administered by the state." The intent of the law was for agencies to lose eligibility if no one stepped forward, not if the

wells available for monitoring didn't satisfy DWR. The paragraph should be deleted or replaced:

~~If no local entity is able and/or willing to fill a data gap, the department may be required to perform groundwater monitoring functions. If DWR performs this monitoring, local agencies and the county that have the authority under Section 10927 to monitor the area of the data gap would be potentially ineligible for a water grant or loan awarded or administered by the state. The Monitoring Entity or entities with the authority to monitor the area of the data gap should provide detailed information regarding the nature of and the reason for the data gaps so that DWR may include such information in the prioritization of groundwater basins and subbasins as appropriate.~~ *DWR will work with the local entity to fill data gaps if possible. DWR cannot require a Monitoring Entity to install additional wells unless funding is provided, and local entities will not be penalized with loss of eligibility for grants and loans due to insufficient number or locations of monitoring wells in accordance with Section 10931(b)(2).*

- Procedures page 14-16, Monitoring Plans. The District currently has an extensive groundwater monitoring program consisting of over 200 wells, with about 140 wells monitored monthly or more frequently. The law explicitly states that DWR will defer to existing monitoring programs, if those programs are sufficient: "Section 10931(a) The department will work cooperatively with each monitoring entity to determine the manner in which groundwater elevation information should be reported to the department pursuant to this part. In determining what information should be reported to the department, the department shall defer to existing monitoring programs if those programs result in information that demonstrates seasonal and long-term trends in groundwater elevations". This emphasis in the law is lost in the Procedures, which calls for Monitoring Entities to submit Monitoring Plans to DWR and doesn't mention existing monitoring programs.

  Furthermore, on page 15 of the Procedures it states: "When proposing monitoring locations and frequencies, Monitoring Entities should justify why they are sufficient to represent static groundwater level conditions across the basin (e.g., enough points to draw accurate contour maps and enough frequency to develop hydrographs for seasonal and long-term variability)". This standard is more demanding than that required by the law. This language should be revised:

  When proposing monitoring locations and frequencies, *it is recommended that* ~~Monitoring Entities should justify why they are~~ *they be* sufficient to represent static groundwater level conditions across the basin (e.g., enough points to draw accurate contour maps and enough frequency to develop hydrographs for seasonal and long-term variability). *However, in determining what information should be reported to the department, the department shall defer to existing monitoring programs if those programs result in information that demonstrates seasonal and long-term trends in groundwater elevations as per Section 10931 (a).*

- Procedures page 16 states that several methods of submitting data will be available, including upload of data files for batch entry. The District strongly supports including the batch upload option for entering all well information and groundwater elevation information required for CASGEM.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the draft Procedures and Guidelines for the CASGEM program. If you have any questions, please contact me at (408) 265-2600 ext. 2324 or BAhmadi@valleywater.org.

Sincerely,

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