Santa Barbara County Public Works Department
Flood Control & Water Agency

December 6, 2006

Ms Tracie Billington
Division of Planning and Local Assistance
Department of Water Resources
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento CA 94236
tracieb@water.ca.gov

Re: Integrated Regional Water Management Grant Program Guidelines

Dear Ms Billington:

The Santa Barbara County Water Agency submits these comments as the representative of the Santa Barbara Countywide Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Cooperating Partners: 29 agencies actively preparing an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan.

It has come to our attention that there is active lobbying being undertaken by several Round 1 applicants that were not successful in obtaining Step 2 funding. These spurned applicants are recommending that DWR and SWRCB limit access to Round 2 funding to only those applicants that were asked to submit in Step 2 Round 1.

We urge the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to adhere to the established Integrated Regional Water Management Grant Program Guidelines (Guidelines) issued November 2004 by DWR and the SWRCB. In those Guidelines, two funding cycles were established, each with open competition for the IRWMP Implementation Grants funds from Chapter 8 of Proposition 50.

The adopted Guidelines are very clear that the process for Round 2 is to be an open and competitive one. The Guidelines were deliberated upon for two years prior to their release in 2004. All stakeholders had the opportunity during that time period to weigh in on the approach to competition for Round 2. At that time, the concept of limiting access to Round 2 funding to Round 1 applicants was considered and rejected. Nothing has changed since then except that those who did not receive Round 1 funding are understandably disappointed they did not receive funding and therefore are making a case for an advantage in the Round 2 process.

Many regions from throughout the state have collectively been investing countless hours and millions of dollars to prepare for the Round 2 grant process. For many sound reasons, not all those regions competed in Round 1 of the Implementation Grant process. Regions such as Santa Barbara County have proceeded to develop an IRWMP at their own expense, without the benefit

or advantage of a Round Planning Grant. It would therefore be an egregious act to take any action that would give an advantage to any region for Round 2. When applications for Round 2 are submitted later this year, the quality of each application should speak for itself.

Proposition 50 IRWMP Guidelines are clear that bond funding is to be granted during two rounds of funding. This two-part process motivates other regions to engage in integrating planning, which is the goal of the Proposition Chapter 8 process. Limiting the participation in Round 2 to a small number of regions is not in the interest of increasing participation in integrated regional planning in California or getting bond funding to regions with worthy IRWM Plans and project implementation plans. And at a more fundamental level, changing the rules in the middle of this process would be unfair.

Santa Barbara County urges DWR and the SWRCB to keep the Proposition Chapter 8 Round 2 funding process an open and competitive one. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert B. Almy, Manager
Santa Barbara County Water Agency

Letter to Ms Billington
December 6, 2006

Copies to:

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Cooperating Partners, Santa Barbara County
Integrated Regional Water Management Plan