



May 17, 2018

Honorable Eric Garcetti
City of Los Angeles
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mayor Garcetti,

I am writing to express my concern about the proposal to dewater Mono County ranchlands and the potential impacts to wetlands, species, and their habitat. Recent letters to you from Mono County describe potentially devastating impacts to the natural environment, habitat and wildlife if the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) pursues its proposal to upend 70 years of water management policy and practice by eliminating irrigation and stock water from its ranch leases. In addition, and most urgently, I request your assistance in obtaining an immediate commitment to provide a water allocation this year to these ranchlands commensurate with current snowpack and water conditions.

The proposal by LADWP to dry up 6,200 acres of historic agricultural land in Mono County would have significant consequences to wildlife by destroying wetlands and riparian areas, and eliminating habitat for sensitive species such as the bi-state sage grouse. The loss of water would also significantly increase the risk of wildfires, which would threaten nearby communities.

While our changing climate and more frequent droughts require us all to re-evaluate how we manage water, impacts on fish and wildlife must be considered in any water management decision. Especially when a decision affects sensitive habitat and its ability to support endangered and threatened species.

I appreciate that LADWP now intends to analyze these potential impacts over the next six months, but it is troubling that staff is suggesting that the amount of water provided this year will be "similar to 2016." In 2016, California was at the height of a five-year drought, and virtually no water was delivered to these lands. If water deliveries this year are reduced to 2016 amounts, without proper study of the impacts on the environment, ranchlands and the natural environment will surely suffer.

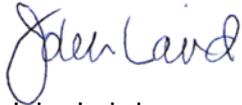
Additionally, your May 1 letter references the 2014 settlement of the Owens Lake litigation and calls it a significant environmental and community achievement. I am deeply concerned, however, that LADWP failed to meet the January 2018 deadline to finish facility upgrades in the Owens River Gorge, as agreed to per the settlement agreement. Due to LADWP's failure to meet the requirements of the settlement agreement and implement certain facility upgrades, the flow regimes needed to protect the brown trout fishery have not been realized, and no environmental improvements have been achieved in the Gorge to date.

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I ask for your help in having LADWP conduct productive discussions with Mono County and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife about not withdrawing the water supply for these historic ranchlands, to ensure the protection of wetlands, species, and their habitat. I also ask that while these discussions are occurring, you direct LADWP to immediately commit to an appropriate water allocation this year, to prevent serious harm to wildlife species and their habitat.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Laird". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Laird
Secretary for Natural Resources

cc: Charlton Bonham, Director, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Karen Ross, Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture
Fred Stump, Supervisor, Mono County District 2
Bob Gardner, Supervisor, Mono County District 3
John Peters, Supervisor, Mono County District 4
Stacy Corless, Supervisor, Mono County District 5
Stacey Simon, County Counsel, Mono County