



County of Mono

County Administrative Office

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May 3, 2018

Via U.S. Mail and Email

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

RE: Dewatering of Mono County Ranchlands and Habitat

Honorable Mayor Garcetti:

Thank you for your May 1 response to the Mono County Board of Supervisors' letter regarding Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's (LADWP) plan to eliminate water from ranch leases in southern Mono County. We appreciate your prompt response, commitment to performing the necessary environmental review, and respect for the longstanding relationship between Mono County and the City to address drought and water scarcity issues. Unfortunately, your response leaves unanswered several questions critical to the continued viability of ranching operations and the natural environment in southern Mono County.

Most importantly, we request that you ensure LADWP adhere to its historic practice of delivering to Mono County ranchers an amount of water proportional to anticipated supply. Your response explains that LADWP staff will determine the amount of water available for ranchers based on this year's "snowpack and anticipated runoff," but goes on to state that this year's amount will likely be similar to the amount delivered in 2016. We understand the need to vary deliveries based on annual snowpack and anticipated runoff and recognize that for many years LADWP did deliver amounts proportional to anticipated runoff. However, given LADWP's actions in 2016, your assurance rings hollow. As explained in our previous letter, under their current leases, ranchers expect to receive up to five (5) acre-feet (AF) of water per acre, which equates to a total of 30,000 AF, proportionally offset as needed in drier years. However, in Winter 2016, LADWP estimated annual runoff to be 82 percent of normal. Based on LADWP's historic practice, ranchers expected to receive 4.1 AF per acre or a total of 24,600 AF. Yet, in Spring 2016, LADWP delivered only 0.71 AF per acre or a total of less than 4,600 AF – only 18 percent of the proportional amount anticipated by ranchers. This year LADWP has estimated anticipated runoff to be 78 percent of normal. Accordingly, we ask that you work with LADWP to ensure that ranchers receive 3.9 AF per acre or 23,900 AF in total. Given LADWP's arbitrary decision to short-change Mono County ranchers in 2016, we are obviously skeptical that LADWP will honor your promise to deliver water based on this year's snowpack and anticipated runoff. Your assistance is needed to ensure Mono County ranchers and natural environment are not again short-changed and your directive is, in fact, implemented.

Honorable Mayor Garcetti

RE: Dewatering of Mono County Ranchlands and Habitat

May 3, 2018

Page 2 of 3

Additionally, LADWP's plan to eliminate irrigation and stock water from Mono County ranch leases appears to be part of a larger plan by the City to completely discontinue water deliveries to the Eastern Sierra. Your May 1 letter explains that the City is reevaluating its current water uses, "including the water historically provided to eastern Sierra ranches." Under the circumstances, we take this to mean that the City plans to increase exports of Eastern Sierra water by reducing or completely discontinuing deliveries to Mono County ranches and habitat. We appreciate that supplies are becoming increasingly unpredictable, that the cost of water is escalating, and that there is a need to diversify the City's water portfolio. However, we note that importing Eastern Sierra water to the City runs counter to your Sustainability City pLAN, which includes your commitment to source 50% of City water locally by 2035. Further, sustainability goals and policies that include "ambitious targets to maximize [the City's] local water supply" cannot be taken seriously when your LADWP threatens to export new Eastern Sierra water to the detriment of Mono County's natural environment. So, we ask: Do the City and LADWP plan to completely discontinue, or reduce to an unsustainable level, water deliveries to southern Mono County?

Finally, your letter mentions the 2014 effort to reach a settlement to the (more than 20-year) Owens River Gorge Litigation. We too view that settlement as a significant success. However, we regret to inform you that despite having three years to implement that settlement agreement, LADWP has made little progress in completing the facility improvements necessary to implement the flow regimes to protect the Owens River Gorge brown trout fishery. Even more frustrating, in recent discussions with plaintiffs (including Mono County and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife), LADWP has taken the position that the three-year deadline is subject to interpretation and that it need not comply with it. Yet it has willingly agreed to pay the daily penalties required for noncompliance. LADWP's interpretation of the settlement agreement's deadline is patronizing, quite frankly, and its unabashed willingness to pay the daily penalties is not only inconsistent with its argument that it has not violated the settlement agreement but also suggests that the penalties are nothing more than a cost of doing business. In the meantime, LADWP continues to export Eastern Sierra water and destroy a fishery treasured by Mono County visitors, anglers, and conservationists.

Again, we appreciate your prompt attention to this matter, including your direction to LADWP staff to contact us this week with information regarding the amount of water that Mono County ranchers can expect. We recognize your suggestion that we communicate directly with the President of the LADWP Board of Commissioners, Mel Levine, and will certainly include him in our correspondence, but feel that the magnitude of the issue demands your attention. To this end, I would like to personally invite you to Mono County to visit and tour the ranches affected by LADWP's plan. In my experience, there is no substitute to actually seeing the sites affected by our actions. Alternatively, Mono County representatives are happy to make themselves available in your Los Angeles office to further discuss these matters. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at (760) 932-5414 or lchapman@mono.ca.gov, or our Board Chair Bob Gardner at (909) 325-0999, to schedule a meeting or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Leslie L. Chapman
Mono County Administrative Officer

Honorable Mayor Garcetti

RE: Dewatering of Mono County Ranchlands and Habitat

May 3, 2018

Page 3 of 3

Cc: *Via Email Only*

Ana Guerrero, Chief of Staff, Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti
Lauren Faber O'Conner, Chief Sustainability Officer, Office of Mayor Garcetti
Liz Crosson, Director of Infrastructure, Office of Mayor Garcetti
Mel Levine, Chair of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Board of Commissioners
Nury Martinez, Los Angeles City Councilwoman and Chair of the Energy, Climate Change, and Environmental Justice Committee
California State Senator Berryhill
California Assemblymember Frank Bigelow
California Assemblymember Devon Mathis
U.S. Congressman Paul Cook
U.S. Senator Kamala Harris
U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein
Los Angeles City Council
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Board of Commissioners
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
United States Bureau of Land Management, Bishop Field Office
Inyo National Forest, United States Department of Agriculture
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, United States Department of Agriculture
Yosemite National Park, United States National Park Service
Devils Postpile National Monument, United States National Park Service
California Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California State Water Resources Control Board
California Department of Water Resources
California Department of Justice
Inyo County Board of Supervisors
Inyo County Water Department
Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board
Inyo/Mono Cattlemen's Association
Inyo/Mono Farm Bureau
Mono Lake Committee
Eastern Sierra Audubon Society
Sierra Club Range of Light Group
Owens Valley Committee
California Trout