



August 3, 2020

Tawny Tesconi
Executive Director
Sonoma County Farm Bureau
3589 Westwind Blvd
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Dear Ms. Tesconi,

I received your letter addressed to the Santa Rosa City Council and Board of Public Utilities dated July 21, 2020 regarding recycled water availability this year. Santa Rosa Water is appreciative of the decades-long and mutually beneficial relationship the City has with our agricultural recycled water customers. The City's water reuse program is multi-faceted and relies, in part, on agricultural irrigation customers' use of recycled water. The City understands the important role agricultural customers' play in responsibly managing the region's recycled water supply and that participation in the program is dependent on recycled water being available.

Water is a very precious commodity throughout the West, and our region is no exception. Over the last forty years the combination of changes in weather patterns, tightening water reuse regulations, environmental protection, and growth have altered local water demands significantly. In response, Santa Rosa's Water Reuse Program has evolved to meet today's demands.

The Water Reuse Program has transitioned from discharging recycled water and incentivizing reuse for agricultural customers through payment programs to a robust and environmentally beneficial program. Today the Water Reuse Program provides recycled water to Calpine to produce 100 MW of clean energy, to urban customers in Santa Rosa and Rohnert Park for irrigation purposes to offset demands on the region's drinking water supply, and interruptible recycled water service to farmers for agricultural irrigation. In a typical weather year, the City beneficially reuses 100% of the recycled water produced at the Laguna Treatment Plant. Through all these changes agricultural irrigation customers remain a significant component of the City's Water Reuse program and Santa Rosa Water greatly values the operational flexibility that agricultural customers provide.

It was disappointing and surprising to read that the Farm Bureau feels that our efforts to foster a better relationship with agricultural customers has instead resulted in feelings of voices not being heard and that the City offered empty promises. For the last two years, City staff worked closely with all agricultural customers to develop a new Interruptible Recycled Water User Agreement and Fee Schedule that acknowledges the value that agricultural customers provide to the recycled water system. During these numerous meetings, City staff heard customers wanted a long-term agreement, low fees that reflect the value the irrigation customers provide to the program, a commitment by the City to maintain

the irrigation system, continuation of the current practice of providing irrigation equipment for some customers, and that the City continue to assume responsibility for vector control. The City addressed all of these concerns in the new agreement, and the agreement was supported and accepted by all customers.

As noted in the July 21st letter, the traditional in-person annual meeting with agricultural users was not held given the COVID-19 public health emergency. However, staff did provide information, through individual conversations with customers, prior to the start of the irrigation season and staff continues to have open lines of communication with customers.

Information provided to agricultural customers in one-on-one conversations and in an email sent on May 20, 2020 consistently stated that due to weather conditions (one of the driest winters on record) there would be less recycled water available for irrigation this year. The email on May 20 contained a copy of the recycled water storage curve, showing storage volume at 35% less than average and 20% less than the previous historical low for that time of year, and stated that total irrigation volume was expected to be 15% lower than average.

Based on the storage volume, City staff initially thought allotments could be avoided and shared this with customers. Despite the information provided regarding low storage levels, irrigation demand remained higher than average for the three weeks following the May 20th email and the recycled water supply dropped 60% faster than average for that time of year. The rapid drop in supply forced staff to impose allotments, a typical practice when there are constraints to water supply, to manage the available supply equitably among all users through the entire irrigation season.

The July 21st letter also suggests the City engage a third party to review contractual performance of the Geysers Pipeline with Calpine. The Geysers Pipeline is a nearly \$300M partnership between Calpine and the City which provides tremendous value to the Regional Water Reuse System, ratepayers, and the watershed. The award-winning Geysers project provides a weather-independent reuse of the City's recycled water and nearly eliminates winter discharges into the Laguna De Santa Rosa. Simultaneously the City's recycled water, delivered via the Geysers Pipeline, generates enough clean and renewable electricity to power more than 100,000 households in the Northbay. The City's agreement with Calpine specifies a total annual volume to be delivered, with significant monetary penalties for non-performance. The deliveries are scheduled by mutual agreement with Calpine and require advanced planning. This highly successful, mutually beneficial partnership is carefully and properly managed, ensuring all contractual requirements are met each year.

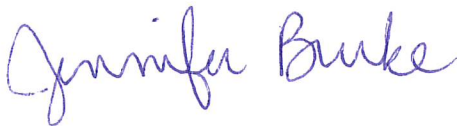
There also seems to be a misconception that this year's much needed repairs to Delta Pond's levees had a negative impact on recycled water supply. To be clear, all the water that was drained out of Delta Pond, in preparation for the construction work, was either delivered to irrigation customers or re-directed to other storage ponds for reuse – none was discharged. As there was no discharge to receiving waters this year, all water treated by the Laguna Treatment Plant has been available for reuse. While the project does not impact water supply availability, the work at Delta Pond did require the removal of the adjacent pump station from service, which could cause pressure delivery issues to some customers. Information regarding the project and the possible pressure impacts was communicated to impacted customers early in the season and staff worked with customers to mitigate any pressure issues. Capital improvement projects, like the repairs to Delta Pond, need to be performed during the dry construction

season, which coincides with irrigation season. This unavoidable overlap can lead to impacts and City staff make every effort to lessen these impacts to customers.

Last, the letter suggests that the City establish stronger collaborations with local agencies and municipalities in the hope of securing additional water for reuse. The City coordinated with regional agencies to conduct studies in 2005 and again in 2017 to determine if opportunities for improved efficiencies exist, and discussions were reinvigorated last year. Potential efficiencies have been identified and merit further study related to additional recycled water supplies. The City intends to remain an active partner in these studies and investigations.

While Santa Rosa Water cannot always provide all the water customers may desire, the water delivered to agricultural customers provides a significant contribution to the long-term health of the local agricultural community. Santa Rosa Water looks forward to continuing to work with our agricultural customers, including our next virtual meeting on August 5th, as we work together to address this incredibly dry year.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Burke
Director of Santa Rosa Water

Cc: Santa Rosa City Council
Board of Public Utilities
Sonoma County Farm Bureau Board
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors