



NORTH SAN DIEGO
WATER REUSE
c o a l i t i o n

February 20, 2020

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Chairman, Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
Committee on Natural Resources
US House of Representatives
1527 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the North San Diego Water Reuse Coalition, it is our pleasure to provide public comment in support of your draft legislation concerning water infrastructure, the Furthering Underutilized Technologies and Unleashing Responsible Expenditures for Drought Resiliency Act (FUTURE Drought Resiliency Act). We are impressed with the important investment this draft legislation would make in our nation's water infrastructure by reauthorizing the Title XVI Water Reclamation and Reuse Competitive Grants Program and additional investments in groundwater storage and recharge.

The North San Diego Water Reuse Coalition was formed in the late 1990s, when four separate water agencies developed a joint project known as the North County Recycled Water Project. This first effort, totaling approximately \$133 million, was awarded \$20 million in US Bureau of Reclamation Title XVI funding. The end result was 10,000 acre-feet—over three billion gallons—of recycled water that is currently being delivered to the region's customers each year. About 80 percent of the region's water is imported and subject to drought and other potential water supply interruptions, making it imperative for San Diego County water agencies to implement water supply alternatives such as recycled water. We realize the region's water supply challenges can't be solved by any one agency alone. That's why our coalition of northern

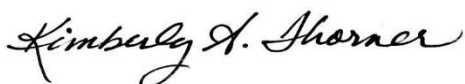
San Diego County water and wastewater agencies has grown to nine members, collaborating to connect the region, based on a region-wide inventory of where there is a supply of wastewater and where there is a demand for recycled water for irrigation, industrial, and non-potable uses. By working together, we are demonstrating a commitment to provide a reliable, drought-resilient source of water for the region and reduce discharge of wastewater to the ocean.

As you know, the Title XVI program is operating without an authorization, and this creates unnecessary uncertainty in the program. Title XVI is the only federal program dedicated to water recycling projects in the western states. As the Government Accountability Office's performance audit of the program in 2018 illustrated, the Title XVI program has operated extremely well using a relatively small federal investment to magnify the efforts towards water reuse and recycling undertaken by state and local authorities. Federal grants for Title XVI are limited to 25 percent of total project costs, and require a 75 percent nonfederal cost share. The Title XVI program has proven to be a vital partnership for all levels of government as we attempt to improve our water infrastructure, reduce dependence on imported water, and reduce outflows of polluted water to the Pacific Ocean.

Funding for Title XVI has been funded at approximately \$20 million for the last several appropriations cycles. However, there are more than \$550 million worth of projects of this type eligible for federal support. We believe that the important increase in authorized funding levels to \$500 million through 2024 will provide a stronger case with the appropriators and administration that further investment in Title XVI is vital.

We are very proud to lend our voice in support of this effort. We look forward to working with you and the members of the Natural Resources Committee to move this important piece of legislation this year. If we can be of any assistance or answer any inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact us at 760-753-6466 or kthorner@olivenhain.com.

Sincerely,



Kimberly A. Thorner
General Manager
Olivenhain Municipal Water District



Glenn Prui
General Manager
Vallecitos Water District



Angela Morrow
Deputy Director of Utilities
City of Escondido



Paul J. Bushee
General Manager
Leucadia Wastewater District



Clint Baze
General Manager
Rincon del Diablo Municipal Water
District



Albert Lau
General Manager
Santa Fe Irrigation District