Agenda Item VII b
Attachment A

SIERRA NEVADA
CONSERVANCY

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September 26, 2013

The Honorable Fran Pavley, Chair
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water
State Capitol, Room 4035
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Pavley and Committee Members:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to provide comments while you continue your discussions on a revised water bond. We understand that California's water system is complex and that the needs are far greater than can be satisfied with a single water bond. However, as a state agency doing work in California's principle watershed, we believe that it is imperative that source watersheds be included in any water bond designed to ensure water quality and supply for the State. We would like to specifically support the following recommendations, some of which were mentioned at the September 24 informational hearing:

- Investment in "source" watersheds: The Sierra Nevada Region provides more than 60% of California's developed water supply and nearly half of the fresh water that flows into the Delta. Failure to include investments that protect and restore the source of California's water would be a significant omission in a comprehensive package of solutions for California's water issues. To help ensure that the source watersheds continue to provide clean, fresh water to California's water system we would like to encourage you to maintain or strengthen language connecting source water and the downstream needs and users, as currently described in AB 1331.
- Funding for Conservancies: As mentioned in the September 24 informational hearing, Conservancies have a proven track record of getting funding out on the ground to directly meet the needs of the areas they represent. The SNC has successfully awarded more than $50 million in Proposition 84 grants for the protection and restoration of rivers, lakes, and streams in the Sierra Nevada and has established strong partnerships with numerous agencies, non-profits, and tribes in

- the Region to complete a variety of projects focused on protecting the State's water supply. We would like to encourage you to adopt SB 42's total of $500 million for state conservancies and we would encourage you to consider an allocation formula based on contribution to the state's water supply in addition to population and geography.
- Definition of "economically distressed areas:" The Sierra Nevada Region encompasses more than 25 million acres, or roughly one quarter of the State. Inclusion of "disadvantaged communities" in place of "economically distressed areas" will essentially eliminate funding opportunities for that quarter of the State. Using the definition for economically distressed areas takes financial hardship, unemployment rate and population density into consideration and would more appropriately address the needs of rural communities in the Sierra. We would like to encourage you to adopt AB 1331's definition of "economically distressed areas."
- Tribal organizations: We would like to encourage you to include tribal organizations as eligible entities to receive funds.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and we look forward to continuing to be a part of the process.

Sincerely,

Jim Branham

JIM BRANHAM
Executive Officer

cc: Senator Hill, Chair, Senate Environmental Quality Committee
Senator Wolk
Assemblymember Rendon