August 11, 2017

Mr. Armando Quintero, Chair
California Water Commission
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, California 94236-0001

Dear Chairman Quintero:

I am pleased to support the San Joaquin Valley Water Infrastructure Authority’s (SJVWIA) application for Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP) bond funding under Proposition 1 to build the proposed Temperance Flat Dam and Reservoir Project on the San Joaquin River.

Rapid population growth and increasing environmental concerns have reduced the Central Valley’s (Valley) water supply reliability and have demonstrated that more water storage capacity is needed. This is evident on the San Joaquin River system where decades of repeated flood releases from Friant Dam have proven repeatedly that Millerton Lake is too small a reservoir to meet the region’s water storage needs. Just this year, with above-normal precipitation and after five years of record drought, much of the San Joaquin’s huge Sierra runoff was lost to massive flood releases because there was not enough storage capacity available at a time when the overriding need was to capture and put every drop of water to beneficial use. Temperance Flat Reservoir, once completed, will provide the Valley with twice the storage capacity we now have.

Equally important are the significant public benefits provided by Temperance Flat’s 1.23 million acre-feet of new storage and vastly enhanced operational flexibility. A Preferred Operations Plan for Temperance Flat, which has been agreed upon by the SJWVIA, the Friant Water Authority, the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority and the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority, has addressed important WSIP-eligible public benefits including:

- Ecosystem benefits that would result from improved water temperature management and supplemental flows in the San Joaquin River for delivery at downstream locations.

- Increased water supplies for wildlife refuges, whose managers would be able to join other project “investors” in obtaining shares of new Temperance Flat storage that could be managed with far greater flexibility than is now possible.
• Greatly improved San Joaquin River public health and safety through broader flood protection benefits that would result from much-increased storage capacity to capture high inflows from above-normal Sierra Nevada rainfall and snowmelt runoff.

• Improved public recreation benefits that would result each summer from the extended duration of higher water storage levels in the existing and highly popular Millerton Lake, just a few miles from the Fresno-Clovis metropolitan area and an easy journey from elsewhere in the valley.

• Emergency response benefits — that currently do not exist because of Millerton Lake’s limited capacity — which would result from additional water stored behind Temperance Flat Dam and south of the Delta, a supply that could be delivered to Southern California, the Delta or the San Joaquin Valley in case of a catastrophic disruption in normally-available supplies.

In addition, the availability of surface water supplies created in wet years is the only practical alternative to complying with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Complying with the law and making groundwater supplies sustainable by 2040 will make local areas and larger groundwater basins more reliant on surface supplies well beyond current water availability for groundwater recharge and banking capabilities. Temperance Flat, by capturing high San Joaquin River runoff and providing long-term above-ground storage for such flows, will help provide those critically-needed additional water supplies.

The 10 largest reservoirs in the state, part of the water system for nearly 40 million people and the nation’s largest farm economy were all built between 1927 and 1979. It is time to prioritize funding for water storage. Temperance Flat will significantly augment Central California’s water storage capacity and provide the public benefits that California’s voters had in mind when approving Proposition 1, the state water bond measure, in 2014.

I strongly recommend and urge the California Water Commission’s favorable consideration of the Temperance Flat Project funding application.

Sincerely,

RUDY SALAS
Member of the Assembly
32nd District

CC: California Water Commission Members
Joe Yun, Executive Director, California Water Commission