



## SIERRA CLUB MARIN GROUP

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June 15, 2005

Dear MMWD Directors:

There is growing concern in the environmental community that money from the new tier structure which is in excess of staff's projected need to meet increased operational costs and which was "intended" (if not "earmarked") for conservation projects, is still facing high hurdles in being used to fund conservation projects. If not corrected, we believe this trend not only undermines public support for the tier structure, but will also make future rate increases more difficult to implement.

It was our understanding that the lack of funding, rather than lack of ideas, precluded the extension of MMWD's well-appreciated conservation programs into more robust areas. Consequently, conservation programs needed to pass stringent feasibility hurdles in order to fit into the then-available funding. However, the aggressively tiered rate structure was supposed to have lowered these hurdles. Therefore we urge that MMWD's investment in "hard" conservation programs such as low flow toilet rebates should be fully implemented and extended to additional areas such as washers. "Soft" programs, such as educating customers to alter landscaping practices, are more complex and uncertain than "hard" programs, but we believe they offer a significantly higher potential conservation payoff and thus should also be vigorously implemented.

Water use for human health and safety, represented by winter usage, doubles during the summer when landscape use is added. This summer landscape use is not only straining MMWD's peak capacity, but in our opinion also facilitating additional customer investment in an unsustainable lifestyle. We respectfully but vigorously disagree with comments made during the most recent rate hearings that landscaping provides a "reservoir" for use during droughts. These comments ignore the fact that landscape water, once used, cannot be recovered and that droughts may not be evident in their first year. Consequently it is prudent for MMWD to develop more effective landscape conservation programs to move baseline use down and protect reservoir supplies going into each subsequent year. We also believe, as does Supervisor Charles McGlashan, that county and well as city governments should actively partner with MMWD to achieve these conservation goals.

It remains our position that in all but the most severe drought years, MMWD has adequate supply for both human health and safety as well for endangered species (per SWRCB WR-95-17 to which the Sierra Club was a party). Vigorous conservation that reduces and caps baseline use should lengthen periods between drought rationing as well as prevent emergency supplies from being converted to baseline use, ad infinitum.

We urge MMWD to look more favorably on conservation programs, particularly those relating to landscaping, which will be coming forward in the near future. We believe that the steeply tiered rates were intended for this purpose and we request that you more vigorously enhance your already established commitment to conservation.

Sincerely,

(signature on hard copy)

Gordon Bennett, Chair