

Keith Hadick, President (Division 3)
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Andy Adam, Secretary (Division 2)
Gerald Mahoney, Director (Division 4)
Vacant, Director (Division 1)
Vacant, Director (Division 5)
Vacant, Director (Division 7)



SANTA MARIA VALLEY WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

March 28, 2023

Ms. Nancy Ward, Cal OES Director
California Office of Emergency Services
3650 Schriever Ave
Mather, CA 95655

Dear Director Ward:

This letter is to formally request funding be made available to Santa Maria Valley Water Conservation District (“District”) through the California Disaster Assistance Act, Section 8687.4 (*Payment of portion of cost of a project where director determines local agency is unable to finance project due to exhaustion of its financial resources because of disaster expenditures*), where the District has expended approximately \$13.6 million in emergency flood control measures during a declared federal state of emergency.

The District spans a large section of northwestern Santa Barbara County and part of southwestern San Luis Obispo County. The District includes the cities of Santa Maria and Guadalupe, as well as many unincorporated communities, in total over 120,000 residents. The District operates and maintains Twitchell Dam and Reservoir, both of which are essential in providing flood control and groundwater recharge to the greater Santa Maria Valley.

On December 27, 2022, the Dam, Reservoir, and surrounding areas were hit by a winter storm—the first of many—which dropped over **6 billion gallons** of rain water and unprecedented quantities of sediment in what was, essentially, dry Reservoir. Indeed, post-storm LiDAR surveys revealed **10-20 feet of sediment** deposited on the dam intake structure alone, which restricts the dam’s ability to operate effectively. This weather event resulted in a federal disaster declaration DR-4683-CA, California Severe Winter Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides.

As an emergency protective measure (“EMP”), in coordination with the federal Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Corps of Engineers, surface water was pumped from the reservoir through the emergency spillway and released through the Dam discharge gates to maintain a safe water elevation in the reservoir and to remove stress on the earthen dam structure. Additionally, the District pre-positioned equipment to address emergency removal of flood-generated

vegetative debris and sediment that is currently limiting the functions of the Dam's Intake Valves, Discharge Gates, and Chutes. This debris and sediment removal is necessary and critical to restoring full operations, ensuring the discharge of captured water into the groundwater supply, and reducing the risk of a Dam breach, all of which would threaten the health and safety of the 120,000+ residents of the Santa Maria Valley.

The District is governed by a Board of Directors, and funded by a small property tax assessment, on an annual budget of approximately \$650,000, used for maintenance and operations. Due to recent and continuing weather events, flood control and necessary emergency protective measures have incurred expenses estimated at \$13.6 million. This amount was necessary for the District to carry out its flood control responsibilities via the hiring of independent contractors. The District could not have carried out the emergency operations on its own as the District currently is staffed by one part-time employee, supplemented with volunteer time by Directors. Further, the District does not own the equipment needed to perform the critical emergency protective measures necessary to protect the Reservoir and Dam.

The District has far exceeded their financial capability to fund the emergency protective measures, in the interests of public safety, health, and welfare. Thus, this letter is to formally request funding be made available to the District through the California Disaster Assistance Act, Section 8687.4. The District requests an advance to pay \$13.6 million in contractor invoices for the emergency work through February 25, 2023. These costs will be captured in a FEMA Category B-Emergency Protective Measures project and a Category A-Debris Removal project, which will be covered at 100% FEMA cost share. When these projects are reimbursed by CalOES, the District will return the funds to the California Disaster Act Fund. Of course, the District will provide, at your request, financial documents demonstrating the incredible fiscal constraints the District is under, and demonstrating the current inability to pay for the necessary emergency protective measures at Twitchell Dam and Reservoir.

Further, the District requests any and all financial support available through the State of California to fund the emergency protective measures at Twitchell Dam and Reservoir, to protect the 120,000+ residents of the Santa Maria Valley now, through flood control measures, and into the future, by recharging the groundwater basin.

We look forward to partnering with Governor Newsom and CalOES finding and allocating the funding needed to support these lifesaving measures. Thank you for your diligent and expeditious consideration of this request.

Should you or any of your staff require any additional information in fulfilling this urgent request, please contact the undersigned at any time.

With gratitude,

Keith Hadick,
President, Board of Directors
Santa Maria Valley Water Conservation District.