

ARROYO SECO FOUNDATION

August 22, 2017

Assemblymember Chris Holden
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0041

RE: Opposition to AB 1180

Dear Assemblymember Holden,

This letter is to state the strong opposition of the Arroyo Seco Foundation to AB 1180.

The Arroyo Seco Foundation has a long and honorable history of promoting and implementing watershed management programs, so we certainly share your goals of clean water and environmental stewardship. We feel, however, that reauthorizing one hundred year old goals for the Los Angeles County Flood Control District (FCD) without mandating reform and accountability would be a tragic, historic mistake.

We say this based on our long, bitter experience in dealing with the Flood Control District in the Arroyo Seco, a major tributary of the Los Angeles River. We have found the agency to be hidebound, unresponsive and irresponsible. The clearest example of this is their \$100 million Big Dig mining and excavation program for Hahamongna Watershed Park, one of the most critical links between the San Gabriel Mountains and the Los Angeles River. After not conducting any significant sediment management in the Devil's Gate Dam basin for 23 years, now they want to remove 2.4 million cubic yards of soil and habitat and permanently destroy more than 50 acres of prime riparian habitat. And the effects on air quality, traffic, and local neighborhoods would be horrendous. They want to treat this precious alluvial canyon as a maintenance zone rather than a river.

As you know, there have been no truly public hearings on this new authorization for the Flood Control District since it was slipped into a bill that dealt with toxic substances by the "gut and amend" method. It would be a sad statement about public process and accountability to sneak such a massive authorization through the legislature before the end of the legislative session without any real public or legislative review.

AB 1018 amends FCD's 1915 establishment legislation without providing for any new mandate for environmental stewardship or real accountability. It would authorize County Flood to collect \$20 billion from the public for stormwater and water quality with no performance standards. FCD will get to keep a cool \$2 billion for collecting the tax, but it will also be able to self-deal billions more in funding for specific Flood District activities with very few accountability controls.

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We have always considered you a champion of saving Hahamongna and other environmental treasures, so we are especially surprised by your sponsorship of this bill. In our campaign to save Hahamongna, the most precious environmental treasure in our region, we have witnessed the Flood Control District's disregard of community input and integrated water management practices. They stage "show" public hearings, and then don't listen to the public. A lot of their arrogance and contempt for public input and accountability is based on the fact that they already have a property tax assessment for flood control purposes and that the County Supervisors exercise very little control over "their experts." AB 1810 would give FCD another massive blank check.

FCD already has their secret plans for the money, but the public hasn't been informed of them. Where is integrated watershed management, environmental justice, stream restoration or sustainability? They are not on FCD's agenda.

The State Legislature and the County of Los Angeles both need to address reform and accountability for the Department of Public Works and the Flood Control District before giving them \$20 billion to create many more "Big Digs." This bill gives the legislature the opportunity to perform its oversight function and insist on reform and accountability, but not if it fails to hold meaningful hearings or to accept important amendments regarding performance standards and accountability.

The Arroyo Seco Foundation has long supported stormwater and clean water programs, but we know that we can't achieve those goals without environmental stewardship and public accountability of a sort that LA County Flood Control District has not manifested.

Make no mistake about it: LA County Flood Control District is not an agency that is promoting river restoration or environmental stewardship. This is the agency that has destroyed the river systems in Los Angeles County for one hundred years and doesn't seem to have changed. Why do you think they will change now if they are given a blank check for \$20 billion more with no standards for performance, environmental justice, ecosystem restoration, climate change adaptation, and public accountability?

We urge you to implement a public review of the record of the Los Angeles County Flood Control District and to write accountability and environmental stewardship into their mandate before any new funding mechanisms are authorized.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Brick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tim Brick
Managing Director
Arroyo Seco Foundation
(626) 639-4092