**WATER PLEASE**

The 2013-2014 Tulare County Grand Jury initiated an investigation into the city and county wells, the depth of the wells, the county's water table and the strategies being developed to insure our water resources will be able to sustain population growth.
The drought conditions have brought increased challenges to the county. The report addresses the fiscal impact, the need for creating surface water storage areas, the need for potable water, the aging water infrastructures in our communities which are requiring more need of costly upgrades, the very real problem of dry wells in some of our communities, the levels of arsenic and other contaminates in the water as the water table goes down, and the very pressing ways the agricultural areas are being affected. Recommendations were made for cities and the county to review their conservation efforts and implement measures as needed. A recommendation was also made for the County to apply for any grants that may be available for the affected unincorporated areas needing potable water.

# County of Tulare

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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*District One*

***Pete Vander Poel***
*District Two*

***Phillip A. Cox***
*District Three*

***J. Steven Worthley***
*District Four*

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*Allison Pierce*

*

**CLERK OF THE BOARD**

*Michelle Baldwin*
*Chief Clerk*

*

*Administration Bldg.*
*2800 West Burrel*
*Visalia, CA 93291*

*TEL: (559) 636-5000*
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September 9, 2014

The Honorable Judge Gary Paden
Tulare County Superior Court, Room 303
221 South Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, CA 93291

Dear Judge Paden:

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, the following is the Board's responses to the findings and recommendations included in the 2013/2014 Tulare County Grand Jury Report titled *Water Please.* We have consulted with the Tulare County Resource Management Agency to assist with these responses.

**Finding 1**

*As the shortage of water increases, the costs to water districts to meet the maintenance requirement challenges increase. When water districts raise consumer prices to offset these fiscal demands, the response by the public is to conserve water in order to keep the bills down. This becomes a vicious cycle.*

**Response:** The Board of Supervisors neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding. This matter is within the jurisdiction of water districts within Tulare County. However, it is generally correct that maintenance costs of public water systems could increase during water shortages.

**Finding 2**

*There is a need for potable water and improvement of basic infrastructure in certain communities. Many low income residents are forced into purchasing bottled water. Those who are unable to purchase or access potable water face certain health risks.*

**Response:** The Board of Supervisors partially agrees with the finding. Although there could be health risks associated without potable water, the nature and extent of such health risks may vary and is not certain in all cases.

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**Finding 3**

*As water pressure decreases and the water table goes down, the levels of arsenic and other contaminants increase.*

**Response:** The Board of Supervisors partially agrees with the finding. As water pressure decreases and the water table goes down, there could be a rise in arsenic and other contaminant levels in groundwater; however, the volume, degree to which, location, and subsurface directional movement of arsenic and other contaminants depend on geologic, hydrologic, land use, environmental, and other factors.

**Finding 4**

*Without more rainwater, the efforts to collect and conserve water will be in vain.*

**Response:** The Board of Supervisors disagrees with the finding. Efforts to collect and conserve water are not in vain. To be good stewards of the environment, public and private water management practices should be encouraged irrespective of whether drought conditions exist.

**Finding 5**

*The water infrastructures of all of the communities in Tulare County are old and need costly repairs and updating.*

**Response:** The Board of Supervisors partially agrees with the finding. Although water infrastructure within unincorporated communities is dated, Tulare County, through its Housing Element Update and related infrastructure planning initiatives to be implemented in Fiscal Year 2014/15, will be making a concerted effort to evaluate, among other things, the age, cost and need for water infrastructure improvements in unincorporated communities.

**Finding 6**

*The City of Lindsay proposes to create additional surface water storage by constructing a levee and excavating a basin to improve efficiency at the water treatment process plant.*

**Response:** This finding is not in the purview of the Tulare County Board of Supervisors.

**Finding 7**

*The upgrade of Visalia's wastewater treatment facility will enable one hundred percent of the wastewater to be recycled. Approximately thirteen million gallons a day of recycled water will be generated by the upgraded Water Conservation Plant.*

**Response:** This finding is not in the purview of the Tulare County Board of Supervisors.

**Recommendation 1**

*The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends that all Tulare County and City agencies review their water conservation programs and implement as deemed necessary. Everyone needs to boost conservation efforts and make more efficient use of existing supplies.*

**Response:** The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding. As part of its ongoing regional, general and community planning efforts, Tulare County will be reviewing and implementing various water conservation policies and programs.

**Recommendation 2**

*The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends the County apply for any available Federal and State grants for the affected unincorporated areas needing potable water.*

**Response:** The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding. Tulare County continues to be proactive in its aggressive pursuit of federal and state grants to address the potable water needs of unincorporated communities. Successful examples of these efforts have resulted in the award of numerous grants to Tulare County identified as follows:

(a) **Seville/Yettem Water Feasibility Study:** Award of $691,000 by the California Department of Public Health to determine the feasibility of developing a new source of safe drinking water in the Yettem area. Such drinking water also could serve the Seville area. Completion of this study is expected in December 2015.

(b) **North County Surface Water Treatment Plant Project Feasibility Project with Orosi Public Utility District:** Award of $247,580 by the California Department of Public Health to prepare a feasibility study for the North Tulare County Surface Water Treatment Plant Project. The goal is to determine the cost and scope of a surface water solution to address the drinking water needs of Orosi residents. Completion of this study is expected in December 2014.

(c) **Seville Water Storage Tank Project:** Award of $78,000 by the California Department of Public Health to install and connect a 15,000 gallon storage tank and related equipment designed to increase water supply and pressure in the Seville Water System. This system was placed in court-ordered receivership in 2009 and has been operated by Tulare County since that date. Project completion is expected in November 2014.

(d) **Seville Water Dispenser Project:** Award of $96,000 by the State Water Resources Control Board from state drought relief funds to address water contamination issues in disadvantaged communities. The goal is to fund the installation and operation of a water vending machine that will be connected to a 500 gallon storage tank that will be accessible to residents from the Seville area. The water vending machine is intended to serve Seville from the Fall 2014 through most of 2017.

(e) **Seville Emergency Bottled Water Distribution Program:** Award of $45,000 by the State Water Resources Control Board from state drought relief funds to address water contamination problems in disadvantaged communities. Through the Seville Emergency Bottled Water Distribution Program, bottled water has been distributed to approximately 550 people who reside in homes connected to the Seville Water System. This program is designed to provide a three-month supply of drinking water to this affected population while Tulare County completes installation of the previously described Seville Water Storage Tank and Seville Water Vending Machine.

(f) **Countywide Emergency Bottled Water Distribution Program:** Award of $500,000 by the State Water Resources Control Board from state drought relief funds to address water contamination problems in disadvantaged communities. This program will make bottled water available to income qualified residents living in disadvantaged communities in the unincorporated area with known water contamination,

(g) **Matheny Tract:** Award of $354,000 by the Strategic Growth Council to complete a feasibility analysis of alternatives for wastewater and sewer system consolidation. The goal is to design a feasible plan to connect the Matheny Tract residences to a muni-style wastewater treatment facility. Completion of the analysis is expected in April 2016.

(h) **Matheny Tract:** Award of $223,621 by the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to complete a Wastewater Collection and Disposal Study. The goal is to analyze wastewater collection and disposal options and prepare pre-design documents for Matheny Tract. Completion of the study is expected in May 2015.

(i) **Plainview Community:** Award of $453,000 by the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to complete a Wastewater Collection and Disposal Study. The goal is to analyze wastewater collection and disposal options and prepare pre-design documents for the Plainview community. Completion of the study is expected in May 2015.

(j) **Monson Community:** Award of $180,000 by the California Department of Public Health to complete a Planning Study for Monson. The goal is to identify the governance structure and complete the pre-design engineering report.

(k) **Kaweah Basin IRWM Implementation Grant:** Award of $398,448 by the Department of Water Resources from Proposition 84 funds to identify unused water wells within the Kaweah Sub-Basin. By partnering with local non-profits educational material has been developed to inform property owners of the risks of not properly destroying abandoned wells. The project will properly abandon identified wells at no cost to the property owner to protect groundwater quality in the region.

(l) **Tulare Lake Basin Disadvantaged Community Water Study:** Award of $2,000,000 by the Department of Water Resources from Proposition 84 funds to document, study, and identify potential solutions for water and wastewater challenges in disadvantaged communities throughout the Tulare Lake Basin. This study will publish a report of findings, recommendations, and tools for communities, local and state government, and non-profits to assist in addressing the various and complex water issues faced by disadvantaged communities.

Sincerely,

Phillip A. Cox, Chairman
Tulare County Board of Supervisors

CC: Tulare County Grand Jury

# RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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Michael C. Spata — Planning
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JAKE RAPER JR., AICP, DIRECTOR

MICHAEL C. SPATA, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR


July 28, 2014

The Honorable Lloyd Hicks
Presiding Judge
Tulare County Superior Court
County Civic Center, Room 303
221 South Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, CA 93291

Dear Judge Hicks:

On behalf of the Tulare County Resource Management Agency, this responds to the Tulare County Grand Jury's informational request entitled "Water Please!"

**Finding No. 1:** As the shortage of water increases, the costs to water districts to meet the maintenance requirement challenges increase. When water districts raise consumer prices to offset these fiscal demands, the response by the public is to conserve water in order to keep the bills down. This becomes a vicious cycle.

**Response:** We neither agree nor disagree with this finding. This matter is within the jurisdiction of water districts within Tulare County. However, it is generally correct that maintenance costs of public water systems could increase during water shortages.

**Finding No. 2:** There is a need for potable water and improvement of basic infrastructure in certain communities. Many low income residents are forced into purchasing bottled water. Those who are unable to purchase or access potable water face certain health risks.

**Response:** We partially agree with this finding. Although there could be health risks associated without potable water, the nature and extent of such health risks may vary and is not certain in all cases.

**Finding No. 3:** As water pressure decreases and the water table goes down, the levels of arsenic and other contaminants increase.

**Response:** We partially agree with this finding. As water pressure decreases and the water table goes down, there could be a rise in arsenic and other contaminant levels in groundwater; however, the volume, degree to which, location, and subsurface directional movement of arsenic and other contaminants depend on geologic, hydrologic, land use, environmental, and other factors.

**Finding No. 4:** Without more rainwater, the efforts to collect and conserve water will be in vain.

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**Response:** We disagree with this finding. Efforts to collect and conserve water are not in vain. To be good stewards of the environment, public and private water management practices should be encouraged irrespective of whether drought conditions exist.

**Finding No. 5:** The water infrastructures of all of the communities in Tulare County are old and need costly repairs and updating.

**Response:** We partially agree with this finding. Although water infrastructure within unincorporated communities is dated, Tulare County, through its Housing Element Update and related infrastructure planning initiatives to be implemented in Fiscal Year 2014/15, will be making a concerted effort to evaluate, among other things, the age, cost and need for water infrastructure improvements in unincorporated communities.

**Finding No. 6:** The City of Lindsay proposes to create additional surface water storage by constructing a levee and excavating a basin to improve efficiency at the water treatment process plant.

**Response:** We neither agree nor disagree with this finding. Tulare County does not have jurisdiction within the City of Lindsay.

**Finding No. 7:** The upgrade of Visalia's wastewater treatment facility will enable one hundred percent of the wastewater to be recycled. Approximately thirteen million gallons a day of recycled water will be generated by the upgraded Water Conservation Plant.

**Response:** We neither agree nor disagree with this finding. Tulare County does not have jurisdiction within the City of Visalia.

**Recommendation No. 1:** The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends that all Tulare County and City agencies review their water conservation programs and implement as deemed necessary. Everyone needs to boost conservation efforts and make more efficient use of existing supplies.

**Response:** We agree. As part of its ongoing regional, general and community planning efforts, Tulare County will be reviewing and implementing various water conservation policies and programs.

**Recommendation No. 2:** The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends the County apply for any available Federal and State grants for the affected unincorporated areas needing potable water.

**Response:** We agree. Tulare County continues to be proactive in its aggressive pursuit of federal and state grants to address the potable water needs of unincorporated communities. Successful examples of these efforts have resulted in the award of numerous grants to Tulare County identified as follows:

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properly abandon identified wells at no cost to the property owner to protect groundwater quality in the region.

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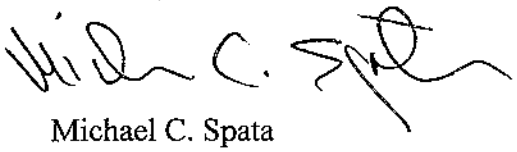
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned at (559) 624-7000. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Michael C. Spata
Associate Director

cc: Tulare County Grand Jury
Tulare County Board of Supervisors
Tulare County Administrative Office
Tulare County Counsel