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August 6, 2025

Hon. Michael R. Deems, Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Administrative Services
Superior Court of California, County of Butte
One Court Street, Oroville, CA 95965

Re: Response to the 2024-2025 Butte County Grand Jury Report, "Palermo Needs Clean Water"

Dear Honorable Judge Deems:

As invited by the Grand Jury, the Water Commission, on behalf of the Technical Advisory Committee, provides the following responses to the Findings and Recommendations to the 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report titled, *"Palermo Needs Clean Water,"* in accordance with Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05.

Before responding to the Findings and Recommendations, we would like to make clear that this response is coming from the Water Commission although the notification letter was directed to the Water Commission TAC, the invited responses were directed to the Water Commission. To clarify, the Butte County Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members are nominated by the Butte County Water Commission and are appointed by the Board of Supervisors. The TAC was established to work in cooperation with the Butte County Water Commission; both are staffed by the Department of Water and Resource Conservation.

FINDINGS

F1: Dry wells in parcels on the East side of Palermo imply that residents must have water delivered to them paid for by temporary grants obtained by EH.

Response: The respondent disagrees with the finding in that it refers to the incorrect Department.

The Water Commission acknowledges that there are identified dry wells in the eastern areas of the Palermo community. To clarify, it is the Butte County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) that administers the Drought Resilience and Outreach Project (DROP) grant program, which is funded by the State Water Resources Control Board. This program provides water delivery to qualified domestic well owners whose wells have gone dry due to drought, which may include residences on the east side of Palermo. Prior to the DROP program, the water delivery program was implemented by OEM through funding received from the California Department of Water Resources Small Community Drought Relief Program.

R2: The Grand Jury recommends that the Wyandotte Creek GSA Advisory Committee or Water Commission TAC include a local well-driller who will provide empirical knowledge of groundwater availability by September 2025.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

The Butte County Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members are nominated by the Butte County Water Commission and are appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Each member of the TAC must have substantial expertise in water management and hydrology. The TAC was established to work in cooperation with the Butte County Water Commission to develop a Countywide groundwater monitoring program, per Butte County Ordinance, Chapter 33. The Department monitors groundwater levels throughout the County at least four (4) times per year through a network of monitoring wells. The empirical data collected is then summarized in an Annual Groundwater Status Report that is presented by the Department's Water Resource Scientist to the TAC, Water Commission, and Board of Supervisors as well as the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies within Butte County and their respective advisory committees, as applicable.

In addition, the Department's Water Resource Scientist participates in the Butte County Division of Environmental Health's Water Well Advisory Group (WWAG) meetings. The WWAG is composed of stakeholders representing licensed well drillers and pump installation contractors. The Advisory Group makes recommendations to Environmental Health on matters pertaining to: a) development and maintenance of the Well Construction Manual, b) implementation of new well construction and development technology, and c) revisions to Butte County Code (BCC) Chapter 23B Water Wells.

Lastly, the recommendation should be directed to the Wyandotte Creek GSA, which is a separate legal entity with its own governing board, distinct from Butte County and the Board of Supervisors. The Wyandotte Creek GSA Advisory Committee has specific stakeholder members, including a domestic well user. A local well-driller is not precluded from applying for or being appointed to the TAC or GSA Advisory Committee, as long as they meet the position's criteria.

Sincerely,

Matt Tennis, Chair
Butte County Water Commission

CC: Board of Supervisors
Andy Pickett, Chief Administrative Officer