



March 31, 2020

RE: Support for the formation of the Tuscan Water District

To whom it may concern:

The Butte County Farm Bureau recommends, without reservation, the formation of the Tuscan Water District to allow groundwater pumpers in Butte County an organized pathway to groundwater sustainability and management.

In 2014, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) was signed into law, with a framework for the management and use of groundwater without causing undesirable results on groundwater basins. To accomplish this, SGMA outlined a path by which local jurisdictions would create Sustainable Groundwater Management Plans, that would be approved by the State, and implemented and managed by local infrastructure.

The Tuscan Water District, a California Water District when approved, would be comprised of 95,000 acres from the Tehama County line south to the northern border of the Western Canal Water District in the Durham area.

Why do we need the Tuscan Water District? There is currently no water district in the Vina basin that can manage the area it covers in its entirety. A district is necessary to oversee and maintain groundwater resources, provide representation of the landowners and coordinate water services such as future infrastructure projects to move surface water into the basin.

Opponents would argue that Butte County is better suited to fulfill the basin oversight role. The County has already noted that they are not interested in water delivery to the basin area to support recharge. While a plan for sustainability has not been finalized, allowing Butte County to oversee the basin management will almost certainly limit opportunities for recharge which is a priority solution option in seeking basin sustainability.

The Tuscan Water District would be governed by a Board of Directors, all of whom will be landowners and/or landowner representatives from within the district's boundary. All landowners will have an opportunity to participate in the governance process – small and large landowners, domestic and agricultural pumpers.

Governor Brown boasted when he signed SGMA into law that “groundwater management in California is best accomplished locally.” Unfortunately for a county like Butte, our agricultural and domestic groundwater users, whom would be most impacted by SGMA, were not in a legal position to represent themselves as an organized body, like the many surface water districts who already have well run local governance. The groundwater users were left to be represented by the SGMA defined catchall, the County. The Tuscan Water District will ensure that groundwater users are at the table and part of the discussion and decision-making process for Butte County’s groundwater future.

We have heard from Butte County’s groundwater users, many of whom are our Butte County Farm Bureau members, and the overwhelming message from these landowners is they want the Tuscan Water District to be their representative. That is why the Butte County Farm Bureau offers this letter of endorsement, with unanimous support from the Board of Directors of our 103-year-old organization.

The agricultural economy is the backbone of Butte County’s economy. As we have done for well over 200 years, and quite successfully, agriculture looks forward to the continued conscientious use of our natural resources, the ability to protect our local landscape, ensure jobs for North State residents and continue to raise generations of our families in Butte County. The Tuscan Water District will meet the need for local oversight and ensure that the users of the groundwater resource have the ability to be part of the solution making process.

Respectfully,



Lee Heringer
President