



# Mendocino County Farm Bureau

303-C Talmage Road • Ukiah, CA. 95482 • (707) 462-6664 • Fax (707) 462-6681 • Email: [admin@mendofb.org](mailto:admin@mendofb.org)  
Affiliated with the California Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation

October 28, 2021

Congressman Jared Huffman  
1527 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Via Email: [jenny.callaway@mail.house.gov](mailto:jenny.callaway@mail.house.gov)

*Re: Response to Your Correspondence Dated October 27, 2021*

Dear Congressman Huffman,

Thank you for your response to the efforts in the attached letter on the topic of the future of the Potter Valley Project (Project) that has garnered over 750 signatures in support of the requests listed in the body of the correspondence. Since your response was received before the final product was assembled and sent to you, we hope that you will take a moment to review the contents and acknowledge those individuals that took the time to sign onto the attached letter.

As you are aware, Farm Bureau is a non-governmental, non-profit, voluntary membership, advocacy group whose purpose is to protect and promote agricultural interests throughout the county and to find solutions to the problems facing agricultural businesses and the rural community. Since we are a grassroots organization we work with our members, and non-members, when they come to us with concerns.

The contents of the attached letter and supporting signature collection effort was suggested by several of our members who were concerned with your recent statements about the decommissioning of the Project. Farm Bureau simply acted as the organizational conduit to move forward with the suggested letter and signature collection process as we have done many times in the past. This is not just a Farm Bureau issue or effort as implied in your response. In fact, most of the signatories to the attached letter are not Farm Bureau members, but are individuals concerned about the future of the Project and the related water supply.

However, since you provided such a quick reply, we would like to take a moment to address several points in your response.

**Question 1:**

Thank you for the explanation of efforts that have been explored related to funding mechanisms to date.

For additional background, a common comment that we hear is, “with all the federal and state funds being allocated for seemingly less important issues, \$18 million dollars, or a portion there of, seems nominal to support the continuation of the year-round water supply for the communities that depend on the water from the Potter Valley Project.”

Although your response highlights several attempts to secure funding, the general public, or even those who are more involved, are not aware of these efforts and defeats. The perception is that transitioning from a licensing process to a decommissioning process was pre-determined and our state and federal officials could have done more to support the continuation of the licensing efforts.

True or false, this is a perspective that you need to be aware of and will hopefully address in a more public setting.

**Question 2/3:**

For clarification, there needs to be an expanded conversation of what is envisioned by a Two Basin Solution. It sounds basic, but it starts at this level. Your constituents see the removal of Scott Dam and the year-round water supply provided by Lake Pillsbury as a stated goal, but there has been little to no discussion in a public format to explain how the remaining Project infrastructure is envisioned to be maintained for allowing water diversion to continue into the Russian River. In fact, those who are familiar with the Project question the process even more knowing the complications listed above with water rights, infrastructure improvements, etc.

Your response addresses some of these points, but again, as this conversation evolves, there needs to be opportunities for public engagement. The ad hoc is not a substitute for open dialogue with your constituents.

Question 3 was listed separately as individuals are responding to the potential Project decommissioning timeline in very different ways. Some see this action as eminent and are considering selling property under fear of not having a future water supply. Others don't see action happening in their lifetimes.

It is understood that you do not have all the answers at this point, but not knowing when the process may start or where it may go is not reassuring to those that depend on the water supply. At some point, you are encouraged to provide updates on any key deadlines that are related to a potential future decommissioning AND related timelines for securing the diversion and water supply for the Russian River.

**Question 4:**

The recognition of Lake County as a partner in the Two Basin solution is appreciated and necessary.

There has seemingly been a lack of consideration for Lake County's interests in determining the future of Lake Pillsbury and Congressman Garamendi has made some appreciated strong statements to support the concerns that Lake County has expressed.

As there are three congressmen that represent the areas of the watershed connected to the Project, it is essential that all three congressmen participate in conversations with FERC and their constituencies.

**Question 5:**

The intent of this question was to request you to organize **public** meetings, beyond the ad hoc committee meetings, in the Russian River area of your district to specifically discuss the future of the Potter Valley Project.

Yes, you have hosted several town hall style events, but without dedicating a significant amount of time to this issue, and allowing constituents to have questions answered, there will be more frustration than resolution.

As stated above, this is not a Farm Bureau issue, this is a Russian River and Eel River watersheds issue. Therefore, you are encouraged to not see the attached letter as an unwarranted "petition campaign", but instead see it for what it is, an attempt to organize an outreach effort to you to ask for clarification and leadership in protecting the water supply for the numerous communities that depend on this water supply.

The attached letter with accompanied signatures and this response to your correspondence is not intended to start a back and forth. The timing of your answer to the unsent letter warranted follow through on our part so the original intent of the letter was not misconstrued. Mendocino County Farm Bureau will continue to engage on the issues surrounding the Potter Valley Project as we understand the critical importance of the Project's water supply to families, farms and fish.

We encourage you to continue to embrace the sentiment that there are unknowns with a decommissioning process along with fear and frustration. Not everyone has been engaged on the day-to-day changes that have been occurring with this process. Being dependent on statements released in media formats often does injustice without additional background being provided. Hopefully your response to the questions will provide some of the context that was requested, but the public conversation needs to continue.

Sincerely,

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

George Hollister  
President

CC: Congressman Mike Thompson  
Congressman John Garamendi  
Senator Mike McGuire  
Assemblymember Jim Wood  
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors