Seaside Groundwater Basin Watermaster
P.O. Box 51502, Pacific Grove, CA 93950
watermasterseaside@sbcglobal.net
(831) 595-0996

Paul Bruno, Coastal Subarea Landowners, Chairman
Dan Albert, City of Monterey, Vice Chairman
John Gaglioti, City of Del Rey Oaks, Treasurer
Mary Adams, Monterey County/Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Mary Anne Carbone, City of Sand City
Christopher Cook, California American Water
Wesley Leith, Laguna Seca Subarea Landowners
Ian Oglesby, City of Seaside
George Riley, Monterey Peninsula Water Management District

May 24, 2021

Mary Ann Carbone, Board Chair
Monterey One Water
5 Harris Court, Building D
Monterey, CA 93940

Alvin Edwards, Board Chair
Monterey Peninsula Water Management District
5 Harris Court, Building G
Monterey, CA 93940

Rich Svindland, President
California American Water Company
511 Forest Lodge Road, Suite 100
Pacific Grove, CA 93950

Re: Replenishment Supplies to Address Seawater Intrusion Risk in the Seaside Groundwater Basin

Dear Ms. Carbone, Mr. Edwards and Mr. Svindland:

I am writing today to explore opportunities to secure replenishment water to raise protective water levels in the Basin from California American Water Company's ("Cal-Am") proposed Desalination Project and Monterey One Water's ("M1W") Pure Water Monterey ("PWM") Expansion Project. This issue is a very hot topic for our Board given that there was detected evidence of potential seawater intrusion in the Seaside Basin. On May 5, 2021, the Watermaster Board approved a resolution to commence negotiations with Cal-Am and MlW to establish terms and conditions under which replenishment water could be provided to the Basin by either or both of your respective projects.

As I explained in my August 12, 2020 letter to the California Coastal Commission about Cal-Am's Desalination Project, analysis of water elevations in several key coastal wells has revealed that higher groundwater elevations are required in both the Paso Robles (shallow) and Santa Margarita (deep) aquifers to reduce the risk of seawater intrusion in the Seaside Basin. To achieve these protective water levels (PWL), the Watermaster previously found that approximately 1,000 acre feet per year ("afy") of additional replenishment water would be required over a 25-year period. However, the annual amount of water needed to achieve PWL may actually be higher, as this finding was based on groundwater modeling conducted in 2013. This 2013 modeling needs to be updated to account for changes in ASR injection quantities, injection of water through the Pure Water Monterey Project that is now operating, changes in groundwater levels, and other factors, to provide a more accurate indication of current replenishment water needs. The Watermaster is evaluating the additional information that may be needed to confirm anticipated replenishment water needs above the 1,000 afy previously identified.

Moreover, the September 2019 Monterey Peninsula, Carmel Bay, and South Monterey Bay Integrated Regional Water Management Plan Update, which was prepared on behalf of the Regional Water Management Group (including MlW), shows that sea level rise attributable to climate change may increase the risk of seawater intrusion. Taken together, the risk of seawater intrusion underscores the Watermaster's need to take proactive measures now to protect the Seaside Basin.

As I indicated in my letter to the Commission, the Watermaster has concluded that Cal-Am's Desalination Plant, once completed, could, in only a few years, supply all of the additional water needed to allow the Watermaster to raise groundwater levels to PWLs in the Seaside Basin. When water from this project becomes available, the Watermaster remains interested in securing a portion of its supplies for the Seaside Basin, either through direct or in lieu replenishment.

The Watermaster also understands that the PWM Phase 1 and Expansion Projects, once completed and fully operational, potentially could be able to produce 3,500 afy and 2,250 afy, respectively, under projected operating conditions. However, it is also the Watermaster's understanding that this water has been fully committed to meet existing regional water demands of the Monterey Peninsula and has no duty to provide water to replenish the Basin. Moreover, the Watermaster's calculations indicate that any temporary excess from the combined PWM Projects would be exhausted before the needed amount of replenishment water would be provided. If this is indeed the case, neither the PWM Phase 1 nor the Expansion Project could provide long-term replenishment water to the Seaside Basin that would serve to raise PWL permanently, as is necessary to sustain PWL in the Seaside Basin.

We are all well aware of the shift from reliance on the Carmel River to the Seaside Basin to supply the Monterey Peninsula's potable water needs. Seaside Basin native water, PWM Phase 1 and PWM Expansion, and ASR all require a healthy Seaside Basin. All of our eggs are in this one basket. Given this, it is critical that steps be taken to protect the Basin from the threat of seawater intrusion in order to ensure the continuing availability of the community's water supplies. If replenishment water is not secured, there will be no way of achieving PWL short of drastically reducing pumping from the Basin and waiting for natural recharge to begin to raise groundwater levels. That process would take many years.

To resolve these issues and to protect the Seaside Basin, the Watermaster is seeking to engage with both Cal-Am and MlW to explore potential opportunities to purchase replenishment water to satisfy the Seaside Basin's needs. Please let me know if you are available for a meeting or telephone conference to begin a conversation on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Paul B. Bruno, Chairman

Cc: Paul Scuito, General Manager, M1W
David Stoldt, General Manager, MPWMD
Chris Cook, Operations Manager, Cal Am Monterey District