

# LAGUNA BEACH COUNTY WATER DISTRICT



INCORPORATED 1925

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September 12, 2024

Honorable Marie Hernandez, Presiding Judge  
Superior Court of California, County of Orange  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

**Re: Response to 2023-24 Orange County Grand Jury Report “Emerging Opportunities in South County Water/Wastewater Systems”**

Dear Judge Hernandez,

The Laguna Beach County Water District (District) has reviewed the Orange County Grand Jury Report titled “Emerging Opportunities in South County Water/Wastewater Systems.” In accordance with California Penal Code §933.05(a) and (b), the District submits the following responses to the findings and recommendations included within the report.

### **Findings:**

**F3.** SOCWA’s member agencies have widely diverse populations, requirements, and revenues. This has led to conflicts over governance, facility operation, and control, affecting the evolving potential for wastewater reuse.

*Response:* The District agrees with this finding that conflicts over governance, facility operation, and control may have limited opportunities for potential wastewater reuse. As stewards of the ocean and of ocean water quality, the District has a vested interest in the potential of wastewater reuse in South Orange County.

**F4.** There is currently no unified strategy for the future of water/wastewater provision in South Orange County.

*Response:* The District agrees with this finding that there is no unified strategy for the future of water/wastewater provision in South Orange County. The District supports a unified strategy to reduce the discharge of treated effluent into the ocean and to enhance local reliability projects in South Orange County. Regional collaboration will be key to advancing both important goals.

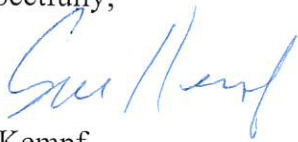
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**Recommendations:**

**R2.** The OCGJ recommends that by January 1, 2025, LAFCO form a task force comprising representatives of affected water agencies to study the transformation of SOCWA and prepare a report on the future of water/wastewater in South Orange County.

*Response:* While the District disagrees with this recommendation that LAFCO should be involved, the District agrees about the need for a strategy about the future of water/wastewater provision in South Orange County. The District supports the current and recent progress by SOCWA member agencies to adopt agreements. These collaborative efforts are aimed at enhancing governance, operational efficiencies, and the overall effectiveness of wastewater services. After finalizing these agreements, the District intends to collaborate with regional partners to support a comprehensive and collaborative strategy going forward that advances the District’s interest in optimizing the Coastal Treatment Plant, attracts state and federal funding, invests in energy efficiency, creates local water reliability, and minimizes the discharge of treated effluent into the ocean.

Respectfully,



Sue Kempf  
President

cc: Orange County Grand Jury  
700 Civic Center West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701