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NEWS RELEASE

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Public Advocacy Group Sues the City of Ventura over State Water Interconnection Pipeline

Project EIR fails to demonstrate water reliability, fails to evaluate the impacts of state water on the community and fails to evaluate alternatives.

September 9, 2019 (Ventura, CA) — On September 4, 2019 the California Water Impact Network (C-WIN) filed a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Challenge against the City of Ventura’s approval of the State Water Interconnection Pipeline project based on a faulty Environmental Impact Report. The city is acting as the lead agency for the project, which proposes a seven-mile pipeline connecting the water systems of Calleguas (via the Metropolitan Water District) and Ventura, seeking to facilitate local dependence on state water from the water-scarce California Delta flowing to the Casitas, United and Ventura water districts.

C-WIN challenges the project’s inability to meet its own water reliability objectives and the City’s refusal to study local alternatives and major project impacts—including the major costs and risks of state water—as required by CEQA.

The Interconnection Project is a major step backward from the growing recognition that local dependence on state water is a problem, not a solution, for water reliability and the environment. State water must be exported from the California Delta, from which the state has allocated 5.5 times more than is available. State water is so oversubscribed that the courts have identified more than half of its allocation as unreliable “paper water”. The Delta Reform Act of 2009 requires that regions south of the Delta reduce their dependence on the Delta watershed. The City knows that state water is unreliable and that deliveries of state water will be negligible in times of drought. In March 2019, Ventura published a draft EIR for its Ventura Water Supply Project, confirming that state water from the Interconnection

Project would be unreliable. The findings were wrongly excluded from the Interconnection Project EIR.

The cost of state water will cripple Ventura's ability to explore and develop sustainable regional solutions. Districts under contract with the State Water Project (SWP) pay based on their full allocation whether or not they receive any water. The Department of Water Resources (DWR) often sets and increases rates for state water without local input. As an example, when Santa Barbara County agreed to connect to the SWP in 1991, voters were told the cost would be \$270 million with 97% reliability. The actual cost, including bond interest, has been \$1.7 billion for, on average, 28% of their allocation. Once a district is dependent upon the state water system, they're responsible for the costs of the maintenance and new infrastructure of the entire SWP conveyance system. Ratepayers have no direct input and no ability to opt out of these maintenance and infrastructural decisions. The stated Ventura pipeline project estimate of \$50 million does not include the exorbitant additional costs and risks of state water.

The EIR for the Interconnection Project evaded assessing the major impacts of growth encouraged by the false perception of state water availability. When the SWP predictably fails to ensure reliable deliveries, demands on other depleted sources such as groundwater, the Ventura River and Lake Casitas will only increase when it is too late to plan for integrated improvements in local water resilience.

When it approved the State Water Interconnection Project, the Ventura City Council ignored an important event in the City's earlier water history. In 1992, Ventura's voters rejected connecting to the SWP and indicated they would prefer desalination to reliance on state water. There has not been a vote since. Moreover, the potential for conservation and other local water resilience options has only grown in the years since that vote, as have the compelling reasons for rejecting state water.

The California Water Impact Network is a state-wide organization that advocates for the equitable and sustainable use of California's fresh water resources for all Californians. www.c-win.org