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February 15, 2006

Lester Messina  
Post Office Box 351  
Willows, CA 95988

Dear Mr. Messina:

Enclosed please find the California Water Law & Policy Reporter with the Butte, Colusa, Glenn and Tehama Counties to Reach Agreement on Regional Water Planning Efforts article.

Thank you for the background information you provided on the four-county memorandum of understanding. The information was essential in writing the article.

Very truly yours,



Cassie Aw-yang

CNA:mm  
Enclosure

RECEIVED

FEB 16 2006

GLENN COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# CALIFORNIA WATER

L A W & P O L I C Y

*Reporter*

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## BUTTE, COLUSA, GLENN AND TEHAMA COUNTIES TO REACH AGREEMENT ON REGIONAL WATER PLANNING EFFORTS

Butte, Colusa, Glenn, and Tehama counties have recognized the need to harmonize their planning efforts to better manage surface water and groundwater resources the counties share in common. To this end, the counties are developing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to guide their joint efforts toward regional coordination, collaboration, and communication. Glenn and Tehama Counties already executed the MOU. Butte and Colusa counties are likely to consider executing the MOU early this year.

### Background

As the demands on California's scarce water supply increase, so does the need for local governments to develop regional partnerships for the efficient and wise use of water resources. In fact, a key initiative of the draft water plan released by the California Department of Water Resources last summer involves promoting regional partnerships and water management plans. The initiative reflects the notion that regional efforts can solve water management problems, consider multiple resource issues, and account for distinct regional hydrology, infrastructure, and political institutions.

### The Memorandum of Understanding

Butte, Colusa, Glenn, and Tehama counties recently engaged in a process for developing a four-county strategy to effectively coordinate drinking water resources and contribute to local, regional, and statewide water quality goals. The counties initially organized to create and submit a proposal for the development of a regional drinking water quality management plan for the CALFED-Bay-Delta program. During the process, however, the counties explored methods for collaborating among themselves on related water issues as well. The counties agreed that executing a MOU would foster such collaboration now and in the future. Subsequently, each of the four counties adopted resolutions to further develop the four-county strategy and create a MOU to continue their collaborative efforts.

The MOU contains three goals: (1) foster coordination, collaboration, and communication among the four counties on water-related issues, achieve greater

efficiencies, and enhance public services; (2) provide a framework for the management and disbursement of funding associated with activities pursued jointly under the MOU; and (3) improve competitiveness for state and federal grant funding.

The MOU states that any efforts pursued under its provisions must be consistent with and not exceed the current authority for any individual participating county. Such efforts named in the MOU include the study and investigation of water resources common to the participants, monitoring and reporting, information dissemination and sharing between or among counties, public outreach and education, and other activities at the agreement and direction of individual county governing bodies. The MOU does not require the participating counties to commit funds for these efforts. However, the MOU encourages the participants to work collaboratively in pursuit of state and federal funding.

Participation with the MOU is strictly on a voluntary basis, and a county may withdraw from participation at any time without recourse. Neighboring counties who share water resources in common with Butte, Colusa, Glenn, and Tehama counties and who are engaged in similar activities will be invited to sign the MOU. To ensure the MOU is meaningful over time, its provisions require periodic review. Further, the MOU expressly allows participating counties to continue their own efforts to address water resource issues. The agreement also provides that consensus will be sought when the need for a joint decision arises.

Glenn and Tehama counties have already executed the MOU. Butte County is expected to review the MOU late this January, while Colusa County is expected to consider the MOU early this calendar year.

### Conclusion and Implications

By working together, the participating counties may improve the reliability of their common water supply. Water users and managers may become more knowledgeable about the water supply and quality issues in their region, water management may become more efficient, scarce water resources may be conserved, water quality may improve or be protected, and the counties may muster more clout to compete for state and federal grant funding. (CNA/KTC)