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Via Email

September 1, 2026

Board of Directors
Joshua Basin Water District
Attn: Anne Roman, General Manager Pro Tem
61750 Chollita Road
Joshua Tree, CA 92252

Email: aroman@jbwd.com

**Re: Agenda Item 7.B – Consideration of Comment Letter to County
(Lovemore Ranch Development)**

Honorable Members of the Board of Directors:

This firm represents Lovemore Ranch in connection with the entitlement and development of the proposed 64-unit Lovemore Ranch residential project located generally at 61650 Alta Loma Drive in the Joshua Tree area of unincorporated San Bernardino County (“County”) (the “Project”). This letter is submitted in response to Agenda Item 7.B for the September 2, 2026, Board of Directors meeting of the Joshua Basin Water District (“District”) regarding the consideration of a proposed comment letter to be submitted to the County in relation to the Recirculated Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (“R-IS/MND”) prepared for the Project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21000, et seq.) (“CEQA”). We respectfully request that this letter be included as part of the administrative record for the Project.

The draft letter prepared by the District’s legal counsel for the Board’s consideration raises several questions and concerns related to the R-IS/MND’s analysis of various “technical water and wastewater matters” associated with the Project; however, as outlined below, these matters were already thoroughly addressed in the Project’s CEQA document and therefore do not merit the submittal of further written comments to the County. We therefore respectfully request that the Board of Directors decline to direct Staff to submit the proposed comment letter.

For the Board’s ease of reference and review, the concerns/questions highlighted in the draft letter generally summarized below along with our responses on behalf of the Lovemore Ranch ownership, consultant and legal team.

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1. “The R-MND should demonstrate that Lot A can physically accommodate both a compliant detention basin and an operable wastewater treatment facility.”

The Site Plan Tentative Tract No. 20443 included as Figure 3 to the R-IS/MND (see p. 6 of 16) includes a detailed visual illustrating that Lot A (0.52 acres) can physically accommodate both the proposed detention basin (designed with a depth of 2.5’ and capable of containing a minimum of 20,233 CFS) as well as the proposed onsite wastewater treatment plant and seepage pits.

The administrative record prepared for the Project also includes extensive detail regarding the proposed onsite wastewater treatment facility, including that the onsite treatment facility will serve as the wastewater disposal system for each residential unit. and will function as a “subsurface wastewater disposal” system similar to an on-site septic system. The onsite treatment facility consists of the subsurface treatment facility and five seepage pits, with the option to add five more. The onsite treatment facility will have an average daily design flow of approximately 16,000 gallons. The seepage pits are roughly 10 feet long and are placed 1.5 to 4 feet below the surface.

Finally, in the event that issues concerning Lot A’s ability to accommodate did arise during the course of final design and approval of the facilities through the Regional Water Quality Control Board (“RWQCB”) and the County’s Department of Environmental and Health Services (“DEHS”), the R-IS/MND expressly states that an alternative stormwater approach could be implemented through which the Project could utilize a combination of both a detention basin facility (Option 1) and the additional on-site storm drain pipe (Option 2). This flexible design approach – which, as with Option 1, would be conditioned on final approval by both the RWQCB and DEHS – would detain the 100-year storm event and would also ensure sufficient remaining land area for the proposed on-site wastewater treatment system. (R-IS/MND, p. 13 of 16.)

There is, in short, more than adequate information demonstrating the Project’s ability to accommodate both the proposed detention basin and the onsite wastewater treatment facility.

2. “The R-MND should present the RWQCB-informed analysis of the interaction among stormwater management, wastewater effluent disposal, and groundwater quality.”

The District’s comment and concerns regarding potential contamination of groundwater supplies as a result of infiltration from the detention basin (presumably based upon proximity of the wastewater treatment facility and the basin) is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of the drainage infrastructure.

First, as a threshold matter, using septic tanks and seepage pits as alternative wastewater treatment systems is both expressly authorized under the County’s Land Use Management Plan (“LAMP”) (see Ch. 5), widely accepted for the servicing of residential development in remote areas, and the primary method of wastewater treatment in the Joshua Tree area. To that end, the

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level of treatment of the Project's proposed wastewater treatment plant greatly exceeds the onsite treatment systems utilized by most other residents in the Joshua Tree community.

Further, the LAMP expressly contemplates and requires that a project requiring an supplemental or alternative wastewater treatment system, such as the Project, will be reviewed and approved by the RWQCB as well as the County DEHS. (LAMP, Ch. 5.) In fact, the LAMP makes clear that "[P]reliminary approval from the respective RWB for the alternative treatment system" is one of several items and reports that must be submitted to the County as part of the approval and entitlement process. (LAMP, p. 49 of 75.) The design and approval process with RWQCB will occur after the entitlements are approved in accordance with both industry standard and the County's practice and the County conditioned the Project on securing such approval from the RWQCB and DEHS in the future and maintaining the Project's treatment facility properly so as to avoid any potential nuisance or other environmental impacts. (See, e.g., COA Nos. 131-132, 134, 136, 16.)

Second, the 20,233 CFS detention basin proposed for the Project on Lot A, is not an infiltration basin, the purpose of which is to store a large amount of water and then infiltrate the whole volume into the ground. Rather, it is a detention basin which *detains* the water during a significant rainstorm event and then allows for the attenuation of the outflow rate from the site to keep the flow rate to below 90% of the pre-developed condition. Although there would be some level of infiltration as water is gradually distributed out of the basin (estimated to occur over the course of 3 hours assuming a full detention basin), these amounts would generally be considered minimal and are not anticipated to have any impact on groundwater supplies. There is, accordingly, no evidence or scientific basis to believe that the proximity between the wastewater treatment system and the detention basin would create impacts to or conflicts with existing groundwater supplies or recharge capabilities.

Third, utilizing a conservative approach, the percolation study for the Project and utilized/relied upon in the R-IS/MND assumed a depth up to 35 feet for the seepage pits to ensure groundwater contamination would not be an issue. (GEOCON Percolation Study, 9/25/2023.) The percolation testing report prepared to evaluate the feasibility of the onsite treatment facility excavated five 8-inch-diameter borings at depths between 30 and 75.5 feet below the ground surface. **No groundwater was found.** Moreover, the percolation report explains that the most recent groundwater level measurements in the area estimated that groundwater was more than 520 feet below the surface – ***485 feet below the maximum depth assumed and anticipated for the seepage pits to safely avoid potential groundwater impacts.***

In sum, given the depth of the onsite treatment facility, the depth of the groundwater, and the types of soils present, the Project's CEQA document determined based upon ample substantial evidence and analysis there was **no risk** of groundwater contamination from the Project's wastewater treatment and/or drainage facilities.

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3. “The District requests clarification of the redesigned drainage system’s effect on groundwater recharge.”

For the reasons outlined above, there is no technical or scientific basis to believe that the Project’s proposed detention basin and onsite wastewater treatment facilities will have an adverse – or any – impact on groundwater supplies or groundwater recharge in the region. To the extent the District would like additional information or “clarification” regarding such impacts or effects (or, more appropriately, the lack thereof), we are more than happy to meet with District Staff in order to address their concerns.

4. “The District respectfully requests that, before acting on the Project, the County (1) provide the additional hydrology, water-quality, and recharge analysis described above, developed in consultation with the RWQCB; and (2) provide the District with notice of any hearing and any notice of determination for the Project.”

Based upon the foregoing, there is no additional hydrology, water-quality or recharge analysis that need be provided in order to address the District’s questions and concerns related to the R-IS/MND. Although not presently anticipated, any future additional hydrology, water-quality or recharge analysis will be conducted, if required by the RWQCB or DEHS for design approval.

With respect to notice, the District will of course receive public notice of any future hearings in accordance with CEQA and the County’s public hearing notice requirements; however, we are also happy to share information related to any future hearing dates with District Staff.

In sum, and for the reasons outlined above, there is no legitimate basis for the District to submit the proposed comment letter to the County in regards to the R-IS/MND as all of the questions raised by the District are adequately addressed in the Project’s CEQA document and other Project-related materials which are publicly available. If further questions or concerns do arise, we are more than willing to meet with District Staff to address any such issues.

Please contact me if you have any questions and/or if you wish to discuss this letter or the information set forth above in greater detail.

Very truly yours,



Paige H. Gosney

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cc: Jeff Hoskinson, District Legal Counsel (via e-mail only at jeff.hoskinson@aalrr.com)
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