



For Immediate Release
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Rainbow Municipal Water District Board of Directors Formalizes Opposition to Forced Merger with Fallbrook Public Utility District

Fallbrook, CA – The Rainbow Municipal Water District (RMWD) Board of Directors voted today to oppose the forced merger with the Fallbrook Public Utility District (FPUD) that is on the agenda for the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) meeting on July 6, 2015. The RMWD Board encourages LAFCO to choose Option 2 in the staff report which would reject the application by FPUD to dissolve RMWD and annex its ratepayers and territory into FPUD.

“Our Ratepayers have made their opinion loud and clear”, said Dennis Sanford, President of the RMWD Board. “We have to respect what the people who elected us have to say, and they oppose this action by LAFCO by a 20:1 margin.”

The LAFCO staff report released a few weeks ago proposes that LAFCO can change how FPUD elects its board members from an at-large system to a divisional system. While the RMWD Board agrees that at-large election systems have myriad legal issues pertaining to the California Voting Rights Act, LAFCO has previously indicated that they do not possess the legal authority to alter the election structure of FPUD. In its December 2014 Staff Report, LAFCO states that “LAFCO does not have the authority to structure a governing board of a reorganized PUD in a manner that conflicts with State Law (e.g, a PUD board composed of members elected exclusively by territorial unit – division).”

“LAFCO admits that there is legal risk associated with changing PUD law through this action,” said Sanford. “Why should LAFCO take such risks when there is overwhelming opposition by the ratepayers to this forced merger?” Sanford added.

RMWD is a rural agricultural district covering 80 square miles of avocado groves, commercial nurseries, and other agricultural producers. “I have heard from many of my colleagues in the agricultural industry who oppose the merger under any circumstances,” said Bob Lucy, RMWD Board Vice President and owner of a large avocado packing house. “Water is the highest priority of the agricultural industry here in North County and most of the agricultural community feels that a forced merger with FPUD, a primarily residential district, will dilute the voice of agriculture and harm their interests.”

“The number one question I get from ratepayers is when do we get a chance to vote?” said Helene Brazier, RMWD Board Member. “Regrettably, even though LAFCO could make an election a condition of approval, they have refused to do so in their staff report, so the reality is that the voice of the people may go unheard,” she said.