

KERN WATER BANK AUTHORITY



VIA EMAIL

January 20, 2026

Fern Steiner, Chair
California Water Commission
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Re: January 21, 2026, California Water Commission Meeting –
Agenda Item Nos. 11 and 12 - Kern Fan Groundwater Storage Project

Dear Chair Steiner and Honorable Members of the Commission:

The Kern Water Bank Authority (“Authority”) submits these comments regarding the California Water Commission’s (“Commission”) consideration of Agenda Item Nos. 11 and 12 at its January 21, 2026, meeting, concerning the proposed revisions to the Groundwater Banking Joint Powers Authority’s (“GBJPA”) Kern Fan Groundwater Storage Project (“Kern Fan Project”).

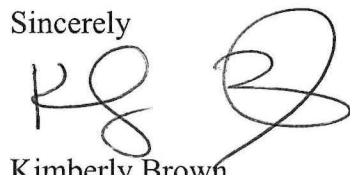
According to the GBJPA’s Agenda Item 11 and 12 presentations before the Commission, the Kern Fan Project description, including certain key facilities, are being revised or redefined. Of particular interest to the Authority is the Phase 2 California Aqueduct (“Aqueduct”) “Turnout and Conveyance,” proposed for construction near the Authority’s existing Kern Water Bank Canal and Aqueduct turnout and across several acres of the Authority’s Kern Water Bank project (“Kern Water Bank”) lands. For approximately 30 years, the Kern Water Bank has stored surface water underground in wet years for extraction and use in dry years. All Kern Water Bank lands are subject to a Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Communities Conservation Plan (“HCP”) and related agreements and permits with wildlife agencies pursuant to the Federal and State Endangered Species Acts for the protection of threatened and endangered species and habitat.

The proposed substantial changes to the Kern Fan Project, including operating the new Turnout and Conveyance facility near the Authority’s Aqueduct turnout and its construction on Kern Water Bank lands used for surface water recharge and underground storage and subject to an HCP, may have significant environmental, operational and/or other impacts to the Kern Water Bank, the Authority, and its members. GBJPA’s Agenda Item 12 presentation indicates the GBJPA needs early funding due to the need to pay for “significant additional” Phase 2 costs, including the costs of preparation of a “Supplemental Environmental Compliance Document” under CEQA.

¹ The Authority is a public entity, formed and existing under the Joint Exercise of Powers Act (Gov. Code, § 6500, et seq.), which owns and operates the Kern Water Bank project located on approximately 20,000 acres in Kern County, California, along the Pacific Flyway. The Authority’s six member entities provide water for agricultural and/or urban uses.

Due to the substantial nature of the proposed revisions to the Kern Fan Project and the potential significance of new impacts, the supplemental environmental compliance documentation should include a subsequent EIR that is circulated for public review and comment prior to the time the revised project is considered for approval by the Commission, the GBJPA, or other responsible agencies. In order to construct the new Turnout and Conveyance across the Authority's property, the GBJPA will need to obtain approvals from the Authority as well as other responsible agencies, including federal and state wildlife agencies as required by the HCP. As a responsible agency and potentially impacted party, the Authority looks forward to consulting and working with the GBJPA and its member entities in connection with the preparation of appropriate environmental documentation and addressing and resolving potential environmental impacts and issues that may negatively impact the Authority's continued water banking operations, property, or HCP compliance.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'KB' followed by a stylized flourish.

Kimberly Brown
Chair

cc: (by email)

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