SOQUEL CREEK WATER DISTRICT

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April 15, 2026

Clerk of the Board
California Air Resources Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Proposed Amendments to the Advanced Clean Fleets and Low Carbon Fuel Standard Regulations – 15-Day Comment Period Response

Chair Lauren Sanchez and Members of the California Air Resources Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the 15-day draft Proposed Amendments. We recognize and support California's leadership in advancing climate and air quality goals.

However, we respectfully urge the Board to adopt a **categorical exemption for critical public utility and emergency response vehicles**, including water utility vehicles, and to reconsider provisions—such as the proposed resiliency cap—that do not reflect operational realities and risk unintended consequences for public health and safety.

Soquel Creek Water District serves a geographically complex region along the Monterey Bay coastline and into the Santa Cruz Mountain foothills. Our mission is to provide safe, reliable drinking water and manage groundwater resources for our community. This mission depends on our ability to respond immediately and effectively to emergencies—often in remote, rugged, and infrastructure-limited areas.

Water agencies are **CORE** to public safety: we are **critical infrastructure**, operating within real-world constraints, responsible for **emergency response**, and requiring **equitable implementation** of State policies. The current framework does not fully reflect these realities.

Emergency Response and the 25% Cap

The proposed requirement that total fleet exemptions not exceed 25 percent introduces an **unwarranted and inflexible constraint** on agencies already struggling to comply with ACF requirements. Emergencies are unpredictable do not occur on a percentage basis, and response capacity cannot be scaled to fit an arbitrary threshold.

Our fleet is not discretionary—it is essential. Every vehicle supports critical functions such as responding to main breaks, restoring water service, maintaining system pressure for fire protection, and protecting water quality.

We strongly believe there should be **no cap on vehicles that qualify as emergency response vehicles**. Limiting emergency response capacity through a fixed percentage risks delaying response times and compromising public safety during critical events.

Operational Reality: Vehicles Are Not Interchangeable

Our emergency response vehicles are not interchangeable with standard fleet vehicles. They must:

- Operate for extended periods under severe conditions (wildfires, storms, power outages, landslides)
- Access remote or off-road locations where charging infrastructure is unavailable or unreliable
- Power critical equipment necessary to restore water service and protect public health
- Tow generators and emergency equipment in excess of 10,000 pounds.

We have already experienced situations where waiver requests were denied and proposed alternatives were operationally inappropriate—such as suggesting the use of a van to transport a generator in place of a utility truck. A van is not an equivalent substitute. It lacks the payload capacity, configuration, and safety features required for this work. It is not designed for emergency field operations, and relying on it would place both staff and response effectiveness at risk. These types of substitutions are not just impractical—they are unsafe.

Affordability and Public Trust

In addition to operational concerns, **affordability is a significant and growing issue** for small public agencies.

Zero-emission vehicle availability remains limited, and pricing continues to increase. At our District, we have already had to return to our Board to request access to operating contingency reserves to meet compliance-related costs.

Our ratepayers and community members are seeing state and local agency staff driving what appears to be 'luxury' vehicles, and they are questioning these purchases. On social media platforms, these concerns are increasingly visible and vocal. This places public agencies in a difficult position: we are striving to comply with State mandates while also maintaining affordability and public trust.

Market and Infrastructure Constraints

The challenges are compounded by a volatile and uncertain vehicle market. Availability of suitable zero-emission vehicles—particularly for specialized utility functions—is limited and subject to rapid change. At the same time, infrastructure requirements, including charging capacity and electrical upgrades, present significant financial and logistical barriers.

For small agencies with limited staff and resources, these challenges are not incremental—they are exponential. Any compliance framework must account for these realities.

Positive Change in the 15-Day Package

We appreciate the modification in the 15-day package that shifts the discretionary exemption under the purchase schedule from 2025 to 2030. This additional time provides some needed flexibility. However, this change does not address the fundamental issue: **emergency response vehicles must be fully exempt**, and compliance requirements must align with real-world vehicle availability, cost, and operational feasibility.

Request

For these reasons, we respectfully request that CARB:

1. Adopt a **categorical exemption**—consistent with § 2013(c) of Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations—for vehicles that respond to, assist in, and recover from emergencies and disasters
2. Explicitly exclude **water utility vehicles** and other critical service vehicles (flood protection, sewer, electric utility, fire prevention and protection, search and rescue, and vector control)
3. Remove or defer **percentage-based caps** on exemptions until there is a clear and stable understanding of vehicle availability, cost, and operational feasibility

Ensuring these vehicles remain available and operational is not a matter of convenience—it is essential to safeguarding life, property, and public health.

Water service is essential in an emergency—and our ability to respond should never be limited by an arbitrary cap.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued partnership with local agencies working to balance environmental progress with the delivery of essential public services.

Sincerely,

Melanie Mow Schumacher, P.E.
General Manager

Table 1 Project Deliverables and Finding of Completion

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	Date Submitted or Occurred	Finding
1	**PROJECT MANAGEMENT**		
1.2	Notification of Upcoming Meetings, Workshops, and Trainings	As needed	Complete
1.3	Detailed Project Schedule	8/29/2020, revisions with progress reports	Complete
1.4	Periodic and Final Site Visits	10/16/2020 11/02/2020 05/25/2022 09/19/2022 11/09/2022 09/25/2023 10/19/2023 10/30/2023 10/03/2024 10/15/2024 06/04/2025	Complete
1.5	Pre-, During, and Post-Implementation Photos	With progress reports	Complete
2	**GENERAL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS/PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS AND PERFORMANCE**		
2.1	GPS Information	05/15/2025	Complete
2.2	Monitoring and Reporting Plan	01/30/2026	Complete
2.2.2	Project Assessment & Evaluation Plan (PAEP)	8/28/2020, Updated 01/30/2026	Complete
2.4	Quality Assurance Project Plan	07/08/2020	Complete
2.5	GeoTracker/GAMA Database	04/10/2026	Complete

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	Date Submitted or Occurred	Finding
3	**PERMITTING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE**		
3.1	Draft CEQA Document	(Submitted during Prop 1 Planning Grant, D181251500)	Complete
3.1.1	Final CEQA Document	(Submitted during Prop 1 Planning Grant, D181251500) EIR Addendum submitted 02/16/2021	Complete
3.2	List and Signed Copies of Approvals, Entitlements, or Permits	11/15/2022 and with progress reports	Complete
4	**TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)**		
4.1	4.1 TAC Roles and Responsibilities	07/10/2020, revised 01/05/2021	Complete
4.2	Summary of TAC Kickoff Meeting	07/22/2020	Complete
4.3	Agendas, Meeting Minutes, and Sign-In Sheet(s)	With TAC minutes	Complete
5	**PLANNING, DESIGN AND ENGINEERING- WELLS**		
5.1	Well Destruction Standards and Locations	08/21/2020	Complete
5.2	Project Design Report	SWIP Well Drilling & Monitoring Wells 08/21/2020SWIP Well Equipping 02/16/2021	Complete
5.3	Preliminary Design Plans	SWIP Well Drilling 08/21/2020 SWIP Monitoring Wells 10/22/2020 SWIP Well Equipping 02/15/2022	Complete
5.4	Final Design Plans & Specifications and Summary of Changes	SWIP Well Drilling 08/21/2020 Monitoring Wells 05/17/2021 Well Equipping 05/16/2022	Complete

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	Date Submitted or Occurred	Finding
5.5	Advertised Bid Documents and Bid Summary	SWIP Well Drilling 08/21/2020 SWIP Monitoring Wells Bid Summary Submitted 05/24/2021 SWIP Monitoring Wells Bid Documents Submitted 08/13/2021 SWIP Well Equipping Bid Documents Submitted 08/15/2022	Complete
6	**PLANNING, DESIGN, AND ENGINEERING – CONVEYANCE PIPELINE**		
6.1	Technical Memo	11/05/2020	Complete
6.2	30% Design Plans and Specifications	08/21/2020	Complete
6.3	60% Design Plans and Specifications	09/27/2020	Complete
6.4	Final Budget with Guaranteed Maximum Price	04/01/2021	Complete
6.5	100% Design Plans and Specifications and Summary of Changes to the Project	03/16/2021	Complete
7	**PLANNING, DESIGN, AND ENGINEERING – TREATMENT FACILITIES**		
7.1	Engineering Design Report	09/15/2020	Complete
7.2.	Title 22 Engineering Report	100 Draft Submitted 12/18/2020 100% Final Draft Submitted 3/9/2023 Errata Sheet submitted 02/15/2024	Complete
7.3	30% Design Plans and Specifications	08/21/20 Plans & 09/01/2020 Specifications	Complete

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	Date Submitted or Occurred	Finding
7.4	60% Design Plans and Specifications	11/17/2020	Complete
7.5	Final Budget with Guaranteed Maximum Price	02/15/22	Complete
7.6	100% Design Plans and Specifications and Summary of Changes between 60% & 100% Design	09/26/2021	Complete
8	**CONSTRUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION**		
8.1	Notice(s) to Proceed (NTP) and Awarded Contract(s)	• SWIP Well Drilling NTP 07/06/2020 • SWIP Well Monitoring Wells NTP 08/19/2021 • SWIP Well Equipping NTP 07/18/2022 • Conveyance Pipeline Phase 1 Contract Award 02/18/2020 • Conveyance Pipeline Project Phase 2 NTP 04/12/2021 • Treatment Facilities Phase 1 Contract Award 03/03/2020 • Treatment Facilities NTP Phase 2 - 11/04/2021	Complete

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	Date Submitted or Occurred	Finding
8.2	Not Used	N/A	N/A
8.3	Proposed Changes	N/A	N/A
8.4	As- Built Drawings	• SWIP Wells- 01/30/2026 • Conveyance Pipelines- 01/30/2026 • Treatment Facilities – 04/08/2026 • Monitoring Wells – 4/10/2026	Complete
8.5	Operations and Maintenance Plan	01/30/2026	Complete
9	**PUBLIC OUTREACH**		
9.1	Outreach Materials and Web Links	In progress reports	Complete
9.2	Workshop Materials and Web Links	In progress reports	Complete