October 3, 2023

Carlos Suarez, State Conservationist

Natural Resources Conservation Service

430 G St., #4164

Davis, CA 95616-5475

**Re: Scott Valley’s Irrigation Efficiency Needs for Priority NRCS-EQIP Cost-Share Funding for FY 2024**

Dear Mr. Suarez,

The County of Siskiyou (County) and Siskiyou County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District), which acts as the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for the Scott Valley groundwater basin, is writing in joint support for the Scott Valley Agriculture Water Alliance (AgWa) request (Attachment “A”) to the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) to provide funding for irrigation efficiency projects in the Scott Valley (Siskiyou County) when California-NRCS develops its State Priorities for FY 2024 funding. From August 30, 2021 through July 31, 2023, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) enacted emergency drought regulations that set minimum river flow levels in the Scott River watershed, resulting in surface water and unprecedented groundwater curtailment actions. Now, the valley faces potential permanent stream flow requirements by the SWRCB, with similar or possibly increased flow requirements and additional restrictions on water users. Scott Valley irrigators acknowledge the need to improve their water application methods in order to maintain their current operations while benefiting all beneficial uses of water, but many efficiency projects are costly and lengthy timeliness prevents projects from getting off the ground. Thus, the interests by AgWa in the NRCS EQIP program.

This effort meets a critical action in the Scott Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), and as described in Chapter 4 irrigation efficiency projects are at a Tier II level meaning they are near-term projects needed for the basin to maintain and continue to improve its groundwater sustainability. Cost-share funding for center pivots, more efficient nozzles, pipelines, soil moisture sensors and VFDs will allow such water-saving practices to be more affordable and readily implemented by a large portion of Scott Valley’s agricultural community. A recent “Needs Assessment” (Attachment “B”) of local irrigators indicates that immediate cost-share of $5 million is needed to conserve water on 4,000 acres over 3 years, as estimated by the NRCS engineer.

The County and District are supportive of AgWa’s efforts to work with irrigators to acquire funding assistance for continued irrigation efficiency projects. This meets the goals of the GSP and provides water savings benefits that conserves water for either in-stream flow benefits or maintaining adequate groundwater supplies. In support of the Scott Valley community, the County and District appreciate the opportunity for landowners to work with NRCS through this coming year’s EQIP funding program.

This letter was approved by the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors on October 3, 2023 by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Sincerely,

Ed Valenzuela, Chair

Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors