

Letter to the MCWRA Board of Directors

From: Bill Lipe

Date: December 3, 2025

Dear Chair LeBarre and Honorable Directors,

I hope this message finds each of you well.

It has been almost eight months since I filed my sworn complaint with the Fair Political Practices Commission. I recently received their decision not to pursue the matter. I understand and respect that outcome, and I want to offer some context, not as criticism but as a reflection shared in good faith.

My intention was never to cause trouble or harm. The complaint arose from principle, based on what I observed over many meetings: sincere comments from several directors about their own bottom lines, heritage, leases and legacies. Such remarks inevitably shape public perception when decisions affect a small and vulnerable group of landowners in the CSIP area. Others noticed this as well; I was simply the one with nothing to lose by speaking up.

I want to be clear: I hold deep affection for each of the three directors named in the complaint.

John Baillie was a friend of my father in hard times, and I will never forget the genuine conversation we shared at the Rodeo last summer. I know how much he cared for my Dad and for our family.

Matt Simas is a good man, thoughtful, steady. I know he was a close confidant of **Rick Antle**, who was a mentor to me. I still picture Rick in that bright red one-piece ski suit at Alpine Meadows, or walking down the pier at Rubicon Bay with that unmistakable Antle ease. Those memories are precious.

Michael Scattini and I go back generations. Our families built pieces of this valley together, Palma High included. I still remember Michael as a kid with a broken leg propped on a pillow in the back of our Suburban coming home from Lake Tahoe, and the Arroyo Seco trips with his cousins Greg and Doug, who were like brothers during some difficult years of my youth.

So I want you all to hear this clearly:

My complaint was born out of love, not resentment. Concern, not hostility.

I saw a troubling trend in our water-policy framework, one shaped heavily by self-interest (understandably so for farmers), but where perceived conflicts of interest were going unaddressed at a time when Monterey County faces a crisis unlike anything in our history.

Our coastal-area subbasins, the 180/400 and the Eastside, are withering. The State of California is preparing to lay down mandates we have never seen before.

Someone had to say something.

God's path for me, it seems, was to draw the short straw.

I became, in many ways, the sacrificial lamb, willing to be criticized, dismissed, or resented, because many in the public were discouraged by what they saw but did not want to be the one to stand up. And that is okay. I accepted that burden knowingly.

And yet, something beautiful happened.

Since the filing of that complaint, I have noticed, and so have others, a real improvement in how the Board communicates, deliberates, and expresses awareness of conflicts. I have heard more care in the language chosen, more clarity in the reasoning offered, more reflection in the tone of the discussions. Even more heartening, new internal policies on conflicts of interest and ethics have been developed.

If my letter played any small role in encouraging that growth, then every difficult moment was worth it.

Before I close, I want to offer something gently, with respect and without accusation: Please consider taking a careful look at your **Form 700 filings** this coming year, especially real property assets, personal property valuations, and any items that may have been overlooked. I am not filing a complaint about it, nor do I intend to. This is simply a friendly reminder, given in the same spirit that Mr. Franklin once quietly reminded me to recuse myself years ago when I served on a public board.

I have learned not to dwell too long on tensions, because it can consume a person. What matters is where we go from here.

A new day is upon us.

The celebration of the birth of Jesus draws near, and a new year is fast approaching.

Let us meet these days with renewed unity and shared purpose.

Let us show this community, and the State, that despite past challenges, **we are capable of rising together**, of tending to our critically overdrafted basin with seriousness, humility, and resolve.

I sincerely believe we can do just that.

Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year.

With respect and gratitude,

Bill Lipe

From: [Bill Lipe](#)
To: [MC Water](#)
Cc: [ClerkoftheBoard](#); [Azhderian, Ara](#); [Clerks](#); [Piret Harmon](#); [Chayito Ibarra](#)
Subject: General Public Comment – Reflections Following FPPC Closure (For the Record)
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Dear Clerk(s),

Please accept the attached letter as general public comment for inclusion in the official public record(s). It is offered respectfully and in good faith, following the recent closure of my FPPC complaint and in light of ongoing public discussions regarding governance, transparency, and stewardship of our critically overdrafted basins.

Thank you for your time and for ensuring this is properly recorded.

Warm regards,
Bill Lipe
Salinas, CA
william.o.lipe@gmail.com