Booth Ranches, LLC
12201 Ave. 180
Orange Cove, CA 93646

November 17, 2026

Mr. Blair Knox
Executive Officer
Kern Local Agency Formation Commission
5300 Lennox Ave, Suite 303
Bakersfield, CA 93309

RE: Opposition to the Formation of the Eastside Kern Water District and the Development of its Sphere of Influence — Kern LAFCO Proceeding Nos. 1847 & 1848

Dear Mr. Knox:

I own approximately 328.28 acres of land located at [property description / Assessor's Parcel No(s). 051-020-05, 051-020-06, 051-020-07, 051-020-08, 051-060-05, 051-060-06, 051-060-07, 051-060-08, 051-060-25, near the territory proposed for the Eastside Kern Water District (the "Proposed District"). My property lies outside the proposed boundary but overlies the same groundwater aquifer, and I rely on [number] well(s) for [agricultural / domestic] water supply. I submit these comments in opposition to the formation of the Proposed District and the development of its sphere of influence, Kern LAFCO Proceeding Nos. 1847 and 1848, and ask that they be included in the record and considered by the Commission. (Gov. Code § 56668.)

I have reviewed the Executive Officer's Report and Recommendation (the "Staff Report"), which recommends that the Commission deny the formation without prejudice. I support that recommendation and respectfully ask the Commission to approve it, deny the formation, and decline to adopt the proposed sphere of influence. As a nearby landowner rather than an owner of land within the proposed territory, I submit this letter as public comment.

A. My Property and Well Depend on the Same Aquifer That Pumping in the Proposed District Area Is Depleting

The lands within the Proposed District have no surface-water supply and rely entirely on groundwater pumped primarily from the Santa Margarita Formation and the Olcese Sand, the same aquifer system beneath my property. The Kern County Subbasin is designated as critically overdrafted. Irrigated agricultural acreage in the proposed district area increased by nearly 3,000 acres between 2007 and 2020, including more than 2,000 acres of citrus planted in 2017 and 2018, and groundwater levels in the area have declined sharply since about 2011.

Since 2011, the water level in my well has dropped due to pumping from within the Proposed District. Another well owner in the area has applied to the Kern Subbasin well mitigation program alleging a groundwater-level decline of more than 200 feet attributed to increased pumping from new citrus plantings in the proposed district area. My concern is that forming a separate district controlled by the landowners doing that pumping will make meaningful pumping limits less likely, not more.

B. The Proposed District Would Be Controlled by the Pumpers It Is Supposed to Regulate

The Staff Report identifies the core problem from the perspective of neighbors like me. The Proposed District would have no water-delivery service it could withhold to enforce compliance. Its only tools, including metering, allocations, fees, and penalties, would be applied by a board elected on a one-vote-per-acre basis against the same landowners who elect it. Staff found that the applicant has a documented history of undertaking no independent projects or management actions to date.

Landowners outside the boundary, who bear the impacts of declining groundwater levels due to increased pumping within the Proposed District, would have no vote on that board. Under the existing arrangement, groundwater management for these lands is carried out by the Kern Non-Districted Land Authority ("KNDLA") as part of a coordinated subbasin structure. Removing these lands into a separate district governed exclusively by the pumping landowners would weaken, not strengthen, the protection available to neighboring well owners.

C. The Existing Groundwater Agency Already Covers These Lands, and Formation Would Fragment Management

The Staff Report finds that the KNDLA arrangement is not temporary: it operates under a joint powers agreement executed September 4, 2025, with an indefinite term. KNDLA is a recognized Groundwater Sustainability Agency that adopted the 2025 Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan, and State oversight returned to the Department of Water Resources after that Plan addressed the deficiencies that had placed the subbasin in probationary status. The lands are already managed locally and would remain so if formation is denied.

Formation would carve out about 39,420 of the 279,277 acres KNDLA covers, roughly 14 percent, while leaving interspersed non-participating parcels and the rest of the non-districted lands under KNDLA. For a landowner nearby, that means more agencies, more boundaries, and less coordinated management of a single shared aquifer. Staff also found that formation would not even guarantee the Proposed District control as a Groundwater Sustainability Agency, because that requires KNDLA to relinquish its designation and actions under the joint powers agreement that require unanimous approval, none of which the Commission can compel. Formation could therefore add a new agency and new uncertainty without delivering the benefit its proponents seek.

The Commission must determine whether existing agencies can feasibly provide the needed service in a more efficient and accountable manner. (Gov. Code §§ 56301, 56886.5(a).) Staff concluded that this preference favors building on the existing structure, and that the effect of formation on the need for and adequacy of services, on adjacent areas and the local governmental structure, and on orderly and efficient government organization all support denial. (Gov. Code § 56668(b), (c), (d).) I agree.

D. The Proposed District Has No Water Supply and Its Long-Term Funding Is Unproven

The Proposed District has identified no water supply contracts and no surface-water supply. It would rely entirely on an overdrafted groundwater basin, and it would bring no new water to the area to relieve the pressure on the aquifer my property shares. (See Gov. Code § 56668(l).) The Staff Report also found that the adequacy of the proposed budget of approximately $480,000 cannot presently be determined, because the cost of the groundwater management obligations it must fund, including future demand-reduction measures, has not yet been set. (See Gov. Code § 56668(k).) If those obligations prove costly, a district with no other revenue base and a board answerable only to the pumping landowners will face strong pressure to avoid the measures that matter most to neighbors.

E. Requested Action

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Commission to (1) approve the Executive Officer's recommendation and deny the formation of the Eastside Kern Water District (Proceeding No. 1847); (2) decline to adopt the proposed sphere of influence (Proceeding No. 1848); and (3) decline to waive the one-year limitation on a similar proposal under Government Code section 56884, which the Commission may waive only if it finds the limitation detrimental to the public interest.

Thank you for considering these comments. I reserve the right to provide additional written or oral comments at or before the hearing.

Respectfully,

Andrew Hart
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