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September 4, 2013

Board of Supervisors
Land Use and Economic Development Committee
1 Dr. Carlton B Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Alternate Water Sources for District-Scale Uses

Dear Supervisors:

We are writing to support proposed amendments to the Health Code and Business Tax and Regulations Code to establish a permitting process for the use of alternate water sources at the district scale. Last year, SPUR participated in the development of and supported the onsite water reuse ordinance, which created a permit process for developers to implement innovative systems to capture and reuse water generated on site—such as graywater and foundation drainage—for nonpotable uses such as toilet flushing and irrigation. This ordinance has been a great success. In less than one year, the SFPUC has reviewed proposals from eight projects to reuse water onsite, which collectively will reduce demand for 5.8 million gallons of water per year. We strongly support efforts to conserve our precious Hetch Hetchy water and to use alternative supplies for appropriate, nonpotable uses.

We support the SFPUC’s current effort to expand this successful, voluntary program to allow nonpotable water systems to be shared between two or more parcels: effectively, expanding the nonpotable program to the district scale. This expansion is a truly cutting-edge policy that would establish San Francisco as a leader in urban water sustainability. The ordinance creates a permit process for willing parties to share nonpotable water supplies across property lines, which could take advantage of economies of scale especially in larger developments. To assist property owners interested in creating agreements and building such systems, the SFPUC has already created a grant program with \$500,000 for FY13-14 for projects that offset at least 3 million gallons of potable water annually.

There is a lot of interest and a number of studies underway in San Francisco right now to establish Eco-Districts, or sustainable neighborhoods. SPUR participated in and hosted the recently-concluded Central Corridor Eco-District Task Force, in which nonpotable water sharing was highlighted as key opportunity for a neighborhood with a high water table and significant future growth in both housing, office, and open space—all of which will increase nonpotable water demand. Establishing a clear process for district-scale water reuse today will help the city lay the groundwork for the the sustainable infrastructure and eco-districts of tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Laura Tam
Sustainable Development Policy Director