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Guest View: Once again, Yuba Water Agency invests in our future in a big way

By Mary Jane Griego

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For decades, we've talked about the need for implementing modern infrastructure to the Highway 65 corridor in order to make new development there possible. My vision for the area seemed impossible to achieve. The ability to develop sports, entertainment, and industrial zones will bring good jobs to our community that we desperately needed even before the coronavirus recession hit. Now we need it more than ever.

Last month, the Yuba Water Agency Board of Directors voted to approve \$3.5 million in support to the Olivehurst Public Utility District -- half of that as a low-interest loan, the other half would be a grant. This money will be used to design the wastewater and water distribution system throughout this corridor. This is critical to jump-starting our economy, helping us recover from the huge hit we've taken in the last couple of months.

Brent Hastey, vice-chairman of the Yuba Water board, said it well when he said, "I can't think of any project we could do that will be more impactful than this will be, as we try to dig our way out of this recession caused by the coronavirus. Having shovel-ready projects that will bring jobs to the area is going to be really important as economic recovery efforts get underway."

As a director on the OPUD board, I really appreciate the vision of the Yuba Water Agency board. Our shared commitment to invest in Yuba County will help spark a better quality of life for all of us. Yuba Water has always been there for us and they have always had a vested interest in our community.

During the 2008 economic downturn, Yuba County and Yuba Water stepped up to provide nearly all of the local cost-share of \$53 million dollars for the Feather River Setback Levee which has significantly reduced flood risk to an area that had been battered by flooding in 1986 and 1997. In fact, Yuba Water is spending more than \$5 million a year to repay the bonds that helped get that project completed.

That levee repair was part of a much larger project covering 29 miles of levees, with several partners, including state and local agencies, that brought a total of approximately \$600 million in improvements to our area. The last piece of that puzzle, the levee work from Simpson Lane to the Goldfields, is under construction now. Yuba Water has been a key player in efforts to help finance one of the best levee systems in California.

It's reassuring to know that our community has this incredible asset and partner in Yuba County. I'm so glad that we finally have a reliable revenue source that exists to improve public safety, ensure a sustainable water supply and invest in our future.

These investments will be a game-changer for a community that has been at a disadvantage for far too long.

Mary Jane Griego is a director with the Olivehurst Public Utility District.

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