



Environmental Center of San Diego  
**Preserve Wild Santee**  
Wild Zone Conservation League



June 3, 2019

Mr. Jim Madaffer  
SAN DIEGO COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
4677 Overland Avenue  
San Diego, CA 92123

RE: URGENT REQUEST TO MAINTAIN HODGES WATER LEVEL FOR GREBE SURVIVAL

Dear Director Madaffer,

Lake Hodges' Grebes are about a week away from hatching, but their eggs are in great peril of being *lost again* should the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) lower the lake levels before they have that opportunity.

**We write to ask that an emergency directive be given to staff to refrain from further pumping of water levels from Lake Hodges between now and July 1, 2019.**

This matter is URGENT!

**Fig. 1. Nests and eggs left high and dry by SDCWA.** Nests filled with eggs, like the one shown high above the water line, failed as a result of SDCWA pumping. The nest could not be reached by the parents. Consequently, the developing chicks within the eggs died. This has already happened *twice this season*. The third nesting attempt by the Grebes (one of the new nests is shown at water line) is being threatened again by SDCWA.



Clark's and Western Grebes build their nests on partially submerged sticks and branches on the water's surface.

Hodges' water levels have been dropped twice in recent months, by about seven feet. When the water dropped, the Western and Clark's Grebes' nests with yet un-hatched eggs were left high and dry. The Grebe parents are awkward low flyers. When SDCWA dropped the water levels, they could no longer climb on to their nests.

The result has been the loss of an estimated 300 eggs that were laid during the earliest part of the breeding season that were days from hatching.

On May 28, 2019, the Lake was drained another foot, putting the eggs laid in the third nesting attempt and expected to be hatched *within a week* of this writing, in danger of destruction too.

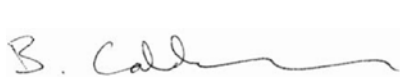


**The devastation is completely preventable. The SDCWA can readily modify its pumping schedule to accommodate the Grebes' nesting cycles.**

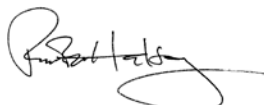


Any draining of Lake Hodges during the remainder of this peak nesting season should be considered a violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and a violation of the California Fish and Wildlife Code Section 3503 which states that "it is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation made pursuant thereto.

Sincerely,



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Lake Hodges Photo Tours  
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CC: California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
US Fish and Wildlife  
San Diego County Water Authority  
San Diego Public Utilities