



PUBLIC EMPLOYEES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY • PACIFIC

June 8, 2022

Mr. James Stahl
Acting Chair
Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
320 West Fourth Street, Suite 200
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Re: Request for Recusal

Dear Mr. Stahl:

I am writing you on behalf of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) to seek your recusal on the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (LARWQCB) and the Boeing Co. concerning the Santa Susana Field Laboratory. This matter is slated for vote by the LARWQCB at a June 9th hearing.

As you are aware, Santa Susana is by far the most toxic site within the LARWQCB's jurisdiction with significant implications for both human health and the environment. The newly inked highly controversial cleanup agreement between the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and Boeing will not take effect without the LARWQCB's approval of the MOU. Moreover, as the draft MOU itself states –

“The remediation of contaminated soil, specifically, is pertinent to this MOU.”

The basis of our recusal for your recusal on this matter is three-fold:

1. Your Own Past Ties to Boeing.

From 2007 through 2015, you served as vice-president of the MWH firm, which touted Boeing as a “key client.” That firm developed the Standard Risk Assessment Methodology (SRAM). The successor firm which purchased MWH is tasked with developing the new SRAM that DTSC will use to implement the new cleanup settlement agreement. The acceptance of this new SRAM bears upon the merits of the MOU.

With the MOU now before you, you are being called upon to exercise independent judgment over the work of your former business colleagues. That situation gives rise to the appearance of a conflict in interest created by your former corporate ties. This conflict would be erased by your stepping aside from this question.

2. Removal of Chair Lawrence Yee.

The recent abrupt removal of Chair Yee creates the appearance that the LARWQCB leadership and membership is being manipulated to ensure approval of the MOU – the sole non-consent vote on your next agenda.

You could dispel this appearance of external manipulation by stepping aside and allowing the decision to be made by fellow Board members not involved with the recent sudden change of board leadership.

3. Legacy of Improper Boeing Connections.

The substantial Boeing monetary contributions to a small non-profit controlled by one of your fellow Board members, Ms. Irma Munoz, has cast an ethical cloud over LARWQCB dealings with Boeing.

The Munoz/Boeing episode follows Charles Stringer's tenure on the LARWQCB. Mr. Stringer worked as a lobbyist for Boeing on Santa Susana while he was a member and while he was Chair of the Board. Mr. Stringer did not reveal that either he or the firm in which he is a principal had done work for Boeing on any of his state government Form 700 statements of economic interests prior to the revelation of those facts by an outside group.

Against this backdrop, further questions about Boeing's improper influence on the Board would have a cumulatively deleterious effect on the public's perception of the Board's integrity and independence. Given the public health and environmental stakes at Santa Susana, the Board's credibility on these issues could not be more needed.

To that end, we would ask you to do the right thing and step aside from further decision-making responsibilities on matters involving Boeing.

Sincerely,



Jeff Ruch
Pacific PEER Director