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COUNTY COUNSEL

January 28, 2025

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CHIEF ASSISTANT

County of Ventura Board of Supervisors

ALBERTO BOADA  
EMILY T. GARDNER  
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PRINCIPAL ASSISTANTS

**Subject:** Authorization for County Counsel to Execute a Legal Representation Agreement with Hanson Bridgett LLP for the Oxnard-Pleasant Valley Groundwater Basins Adjudication in an Amount not to Exceed \$45,000  
**RECOMMENDATION NO. 2 REQUIRES 4/5THs VOTE**

**ASSISTANTS**

PAULINA BELOVARSKI  
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CHRISTINE A. RENSHAW  
JACLYN SMITH  
JUSTUS SPILLNER  
LINDA L. STEVENSON  
THOMAS W. TEMPLE  
FRANCESCA S. VERDIN  
ERIC WALTZ

**Recommendations:**

1. Authorize County Counsel to execute a legal representation agreement (Exhibit 1) with Hanson Bridgett LLP for the Oxnard-Pleasant Valley groundwater basins adjudication in an amount not to exceed \$45,000.
2. Authorize and direct the Auditor-Controller's Office to make the necessary accounting transaction for this item as follows:

INCREASE	1800	Services and Supplies	\$45,000
DECREASE	G001-5811	Fund Balance – Litigation	\$45,000

**Fiscal Impact:**

	FY 2024-25
Revenues	\$ 0
Costs	\$ 45,000
Net County Cost	\$ 45,000

Funding Source: General Fund – Fund Balance Assigned for Litigation

**Discussion:**

County Counsel is seeking authorization to execute, on behalf of the County, a legal representation agreement with Hanson Bridgett LLP (“Hanson Bridgett”) (Exhibit 1) for the litigation entitled *OPV Coalition et al. v. Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency*, Santa Barbara County Superior Court Case No. VENC100555357 (“OPV Adjudication”), which is a comprehensive adjudication of the groundwater rights in the Oxnard and Pleasant Valley groundwater basins. The Oxnard basin underlies the Oxnard and Port Hueneme areas and a small part of southern Ventura near the Santa Clara River. The Pleasant Valley basin underlies the Camarillo area. The County owns real property in these areas the development of which could be affected by the adjudication.

Due to the specialized nature of water rights and groundwater adjudications, County Counsel is recommending engagement of outside legal counsel to, preliminarily, conduct research and advise regarding the County’s potential interests and legal rights that may be implicated by the adjudication of the Oxnard and Pleasant Valley groundwater basins. County Counsel may subsequently return to your Board recommending authorization to increase the amount of this legal representation agreement depending upon the results of this initial assessment.

The County, Ventura County Watershed Protection District and the Ventura County Waterworks District Nos. 1 and 19 are currently represented by, and are parties to a legal representation agreement with, Hanson Bridgett in the following lawsuits:

1. *Las Posas Valley Water Rights Coalition, et al. v. Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency, et al.*, Santa Barbara Sup. Ct. Case No. VENC100509700, a comprehensive adjudication of the groundwater rights to the Las Posas Valley Groundwater Basin, and
2. *Santa Barbara Channelkeeper v. State Water Resources Control Board et al.*, Los Angeles Sup. Ct. Case No. 19SSTCP01176, another comprehensive groundwater adjudication involving the Ventura River Watershed.

(See October 30, 2018, November 19, 2019, May 23, 2023, and September 10, 2024 Board meeting agendas.)

Given Hanson Bridgett’s representation of the County in the above lawsuits, and general familiarity with the County and its operations, it would be cost effective to retain the same law firm for the Oxnard-Pleasant Valley groundwater basins adjudication.

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**Strategic Plan:**

The recommendations are consistent with your Board's strategic plan priorities of reliable infrastructure and sustainability.

This item has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, the Auditor Controller's Office and County Counsel. If you have any questions regarding this item, please call me at (805) 654-2580.

Sincerely,

TIFFANY N. NORTH  
County Counsel



Jeffrey E. Barnes  
Chief Assistant County Counsel

JEB:tdb

Exhibit 1: Legal Representation Agreement