Dear [Recipient],

As wildfires blaze across California, I urge your support in raising the water level of Lake Hodges in San Diego County. Just 13 feet—still 25 feet below the dam's crest—will prevent devastating fires from endangering the communities of Rancho Bernardo, Escondido, Del Dios, and Rancho Santa Fe. Despite this urgent threat, the California Department of Dam Safety has mandated the lake level remain at 280 feet, overlooking critical wildfire risks while focusing solely on the slim possibility of dam failure. It’s time we strike a smarter balance before another disaster ignites.

Lake Hodges rests on solid granite in a region with one of the lowest seismic risks in California. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the probability of a total dam failure is less than 0.1% over the next decade. In contrast, the likelihood of a major wildfire in this drought-stricken region, driven by Santa Ana winds, exceeds 50% over the same period—a risk that is 500 times greater than that of a dam failure. Even in the rare event of a dam breach, the worst-case scenario would result in damage to approximately 500 homes. In contrast, a wildfire could threaten 10,000 homes, cause billions of dollars in destruction, and potentially result in significant loss of life.

**Wildfire Risk Reduction**
Raising the lake level by 13 feet is a crucial measure to safeguard our communities. Currently, the 35-foot drop in the water level has exposed 540 acres of dry brush, dramatically increasing fire fuel loads. This exposure has elevated wildfire risk by 40-50%, placing thousands of homes and lives in Rancho Bernardo, Escondido, Del Dios, Fairbanks Ranch, and Rancho Santa Fe at heightened risk. The decision to lower the water level by such a significant margin was made without adequately considering the severe upstream consequences or conducting a comprehensive risk-benefit analysis.

**Community and Economic Benefits**
Increasing the lake level to 293 feet would provide approximately 10 billion gallons of additional water storage, bolstering the region’s water supply in drought-prone Southern California. This aligns with the goals of California Proposition 4, which was approved by voters in November 2024 and mandates enhanced water storage. Unfortunately, billions of gallons of water have already been unnecessarily released, directly contravening the intent of Proposition 4.

Beyond water security, raising the lake level would restore functionality to the hydroelectric plant, a $200 million taxpayer-funded asset capable of generating clean energy for approximately 26,000 homes annually. This would contribute to California’s renewable energy goals and reduce dependency on fossil fuels. Additionally, stabilizing the water level could help lower water costs for local districts, promote economic growth, and improve recreational opportunities, enhancing quality of life for residents and boosting local tourism.

**Wildlife Habitat Preservation**
Restoring the lake level would also revitalize critical habitats for fish, birds, and other wildlife. Lake Hodges serves as a vital ecosystem for various species, including the iconic Grebes. Lower water levels have decimated local bird populations, with successful Grebe nests dropping from hundreds to fewer than 13. As urbanization and farming continue to erode natural wetlands, Lake Hodges remains a critical stopover along the Pacific Flyway for migratory birds. Raising the water level would help protect biodiversity and support essential ecological functions, such as water purification.

**Broad-Based Support**
This proposal has garnered widespread support from diverse stakeholders, including the local Sierra Club, fishermen, wildlife conservation groups, and town councils. The Citizens Advisory Committee for the San Dieguito River Park unanimously approved the measure, and the San Diego Gas and Electric Wildfire Prevention Group agrees that raising the lake level would create a natural firebreak, reducing the risk of a catastrophic wildfire.

I would be happy to provide additional documentation, including articles from local newspapers and links to supportive news stories aired on local television.

I strongly urge you to consider the compelling environmental, safety, and economic benefits of raising the water level of Lake Hodges. By doing so, you will help protect our communities from the imminent threat of wildfires, preserve critical wildlife habitats, and ensure long-term water security for the region. We cannot afford to wait—the safety and well-being of thousands of families depend on swift and decisive action.

I look forward to your written reply of support for this vital initiative or the reason(s) you cannot help us save our communities.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Your Contact Information]