



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



Councilmember Mark Kersey  
 San Diego City Council, District 5  
 City Administration Building 202 "C" Street 10th Floor  
 San Diego, CA 92101

**Re: Destruction of Nesting Birds at Lake Hodges**

May 28, 2019

Dear Councilmember Kersey,

Hundreds of Western and Clark’s Grebe nests and their eggs have been lost this spring due to the untimely pumping of water from Lake Hodges by the San Diego County Water Authority during the peak nesting season.

This is a blatant disregard for San Diego’s priceless biodiversity, a violation of 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.”

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



If the water level drops too quickly, these nests are left high and dry above the water – the Grebes cannot climb back into the nests to continue incubating eggs and the nest fails.



A significant number of nests failed this spring due to water being drawn from the lake at the end of March and then again at the end of April. Approximately 300 eggs were abandoned during these events.

To make matters worse, most of these eggs were within a few days of hatching, close to 3 weeks into their incubation period of 24 days.



For the past 2 years, we have witnessed similar events. This year we have been documenting the failing nests, taking detailed counts from the water, from the air, from the shore, and from the bridge that crosses the east end of the lake.

**The devastation is completely preventable.** The San Diego County Water Authority can easily modify its pumping schedule to accommodate the Grebe's nesting cycles.

We urge you to initiate an investigation into this matter and prevent the further loss of native bird species at Lake Hodges.



Sincerely,

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CC: California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
San Diego County Water Authority  
San Diego Public Utilities