January 30, 2015

President John Hennessy  
Office of the President  
Building 10  
Stanford University  
Stanford, CA 94305-2061

Dear President Hennessy:

We write today regarding the future of Searsville Dam.

- We understand that Stanford University and watershed stakeholders are currently studying alternatives for Searsville Dam, including modifying the dam and removing the dam.

- We understand that any alternative pursued will seek to ensure flood protection and dam safety for downstream communities.

- We understand that Stanford is studying alternatives to restore native fish migration, in addition to other native wildlife migration, between the San Francisco Bay and Portola Valley creeks currently blocked by the dam.

- Many of the creeks upstream of Searsville Dam occur in Portola Valley; Corte Madera Creek and tributaries continue to support wild rainbow trout populations.

- Portola Valley has been a steward of the creeks, streams and dependent wildlife within its boundaries for more than 50 years. We have adopted model creekside regulations to protect the watershed and have removed a large section of culvert to daylight and restore a stretch of Sausal Creek that runs through the Portola Valley Town Center.

- Searsville Dam presently prevents all migration of native fish, including threatened steelhead trout, from migrating upstream into Corte Madera Creek, Sausal Creek and tributaries within Portola Valley. The reservoir and dam also present a major barrier to the downstream migration of native rainbow trout and other wildlife from Portola Valley to downstream reaches and the SF Bay.

- An alternative that restores natural stream and watershed functions would improve habitat for many species of wildlife and increase water availability in the stream system, essential to protecting wildlife and vegetation throughout periods of extended drought.
• Restoring natural creek functions will increase the watershed’s resiliency to climate change and is conceptually supported in Governor Brown’s Water Action Plan—it can restore important ecosystems, improve groundwater management and increase coastal flood protection in an area affected by sea-level rise.

• The steelhead population within the San Francisquito watershed is at risk from climate change due to extended dry periods and decreased water availability in the lower watershed and lack of access to perennial stream reaches above the dam. We support an alternative that improves habitat features for fish such as pools and riffles, results in stream channel restoration that also provides flood attenuation and sediment stabilization, and increases water availability in the creek.

• We support a Searsville alternative that allows effective and self-sustainable migration of native fish and wildlife species, including sea-run steelhead trout, to swim from San Francisquito Creek to Portola Valley creeks and safely back downstream.

• We support an unimpeded migration corridor along Corte Madera Creek and other creeks to enable effective wildlife migration to and from Portola Valley in order to ensure that wildlife can maintain genetic diversity and adapt to a changing climate.

Thank you for your consideration of this resolution.

Portola Valley Town Council

cc:  Provost John Etchemendy
     Jean McCown, Assistant Vice President, Director of Community Relations