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SJAFA TO BEGIN NEW YEAR WITH NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STOCKTON, CA – The San Joaquin Area Flood Control Agency (SJAFA) Board of Directors has announced the hire of Darren Suen as its new executive director. Suen succeeds outgoing Executive Director Chris Elias, who joined SJAFA in 2018, and has been credited with expanding the agency's mission and influence to reduce flood risk for the region. Suen will assume oversight for SJAFA's engagement in almost \$2 billion in flood risk reduction projects, to include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers \$1.4 billion Lower San Joaquin River Project. Elias will remain on board in a limited capacity to ensure a smooth transition for executive leadership.

During its meeting on December 12, the SJAFA Board cited Suen's impressive background and experience as a major factor in its hiring decision. "We believe you'll help elevate SJAFA to the next level, bringing new life and relationships to our work," said SJAFA Board member and San Joaquin County Supervisor Paul Canepa following the Board's unanimous vote to hire Suen.

Suen, a licensed civil engineer, has worked for several of SJAFA's partner agencies, including as a project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as chief of the Flood Operations Center for the CA Department of Water Resources, and as a principal water resources engineer with the CA Central Valley Flood Protection Board. Most recently he served as a chief of staff in the CA Assembly. Suen has a BS in Civil Engineering from Cal Poly and holds an Executive MBA from the University of Phoenix.

"You're the complete package," said SJAFA Board member and Manteca City Mayor Gary Singh following Canepa's comments. "I'm very appreciative of your political and professional experience, all of which will be put to good use in this leadership role." Board members noted the importance of strengthening political and partner agency relationships to ensure continued progress on current projects, which also includes a \$473 million effort to improve Lower San Joaquin River levees that protect the Mossdale Tract Area. The area includes south Stockton's Weston Ranch, along with large portions of Lathrop and Manteca.

"San Joaquin County has historically been left behind on investments, but we've made a lot of progress in the past eight years," said outgoing SJAFA Board Member and Stockton City Councilwoman Kimberly Warmsley. "We'll look to you to carry on that important work."

In response to the Board's comments, Suen cited his excitement about the region, noting that it's one of the fastest growing areas in the United States. "I'm incredibly honored and humbled by the opportunity to work with this Board on behalf of the communities of Stockton, Lathrop, and Manteca," said Suen. "I'm looking forward to meeting with community members so that I can learn about the community through their eyes, so I can understand what they're fighting to protect."

Suen, a resident of Elk Grove and sitting Elk Grove City Councilman, will officially take the helm of SJAFA on January 2, 2025. For more information on SJAFA's project and programs, visit www.sjafca.org.

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SJAFA is a joint powers authority of the cities of Stockton, Lathrop and Manteca, San Joaquin County, and San Joaquin County Flood Control and Water Conservation District. Its mission is to reduce and manage flood risk within most of San Joaquin County.