



**San Diego County**  
**Local Agency Formation Commission**  
 Regional Service Planning | Subdivision of the State of California

**5C**

**AGENDA REPORT**  
 Business | Discussion

January 16, 2026

**TO:** Special Districts Advisory Committee

**FROM:** Priscilla Mumpower, Assistant Executive Officer  
 Joelle Burila, Local Government Analyst I

**SUBJECT:** **Workplan Update on Legislative Proposal |  
 Implementing UC Report Recommendations to Expand LAFCOs’ Effectiveness**

**SUMMARY**

The Special Districts Advisory Committee (“Committee”) will receive an update on a San Diego LAFCO workplan project focused on developing legislation consistent with recommendations from a recent University of California (Berkeley) report. The report examined opportunities and challenges for providing safe drinking water to residents in need, including LAFCO’s role in matching public services with community needs. Staff has been coordinating with the report’s authors and stakeholders, including other LAFCOs, to develop statutory amendments aligned with the report’s recommendations. Consensus has been reached on draft bill language, and current efforts focus on identifying a legislative author and engaging stakeholder organizations for potential sponsorship. This item is presented for Committee discussion and feedback on the draft language.

**BACKGROUND**

San Diego LAFCO adopted its current fiscal year workplan at a public hearing in May 2025. The workplan identifies 30 special projects organized into statutory and administrative categories, each with assigned priority levels established by the Commission. One of these projects

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directs staff to explore future legislative changes intended to enhance LAFCO effectiveness, consistent with the findings of a January 2024 UC Berkeley report.

## University of California Berkeley Report | LAFCo and Water System Consolidation

In January 2024, UC Berkeley's Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources published a report by Professor Kristin Dobbin and PhD Candidate Justin McBride examining how LAFCOs and State regulators interact to improve drinking water system reliability and related public policy topics. The Committee received a presentation on the report and its recommendations on April 18, 2024<sup>1</sup>

### DISCUSSION

The Committee will receive an update on ongoing work to advance recommendations from the January 2024 UC Berkeley report related to strengthening LAFCO authority over public water systems, particularly for disadvantaged communities. San Diego LAFCO has been collaborating with several peer agencies – including Orange, Sacramento, Santa Cruz LAFCOs – alongside Professor Dobbin and the Community Water Center to develop a legislative proposal. Consensus has been reached on draft bill language, and current efforts focus on identifying a legislative author and engaging the Alliance of LAFCOs and CALAFCO regarding possible co-sponsorship. Three main topics underlie the draft and summarized below.

- Expand LAFCOs' initiating powers to include reorganizations (such as annexations) and outside service extensions when warranted to address documented public health or safety threats related to water or wastewater service.
- Amend the municipal service review statute to require LAFCOs to perform and document community outreach before taking final actions and require subject agencies to respond to municipal service reviews after their own agenda noticing.
- Amend the definition of mutual water companies to include mobile home parks that operate community water systems, thereby requiring these entities to file service information with LAFCOs.

Additional details are attached.

### ANALYSIS

The draft legislative proposal advances LAFCOs' statutory role in aligning municipal service delivery with community needs, consistent with Commission direction to pursue UC Berkeley report recommendations as part of the adopted workplan. The proposed amendments provide measured authority that concurrently motivates local agencies to address public water and wastewater service needs proactively while establishing clear pathways for LAFCO

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<sup>1</sup> Link: [Special Districts Advisory Committee April 18, 2025 Report on UC Berkeley Legislative Effort](#)

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intervention when necessary. Towards this latter end, providing explicit authority for LAFCOs to initiate annexations or out-of-agency services in response to documented water or wastewater public health threats offers a more direct path for resolving urgent service gaps. The proposal also strengthens the municipal service review framework by requiring formal agency responses and documented public engagement, addressing a Commission priority to increase municipal service reviews' transparency and community involvement. Finally, clarifying mobile home parks operating community water systems qualify as mutual water companies improves LAFCOs' access to information necessary for effective oversight.

Committee discussion and feedback will be incorporated as appropriate in refining the draft legislative proposal and seeking an author and sponsor.

**RECOMMENDATION**

This item is presented to the Committee for discussion and feedback.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION**

None.

**PROCEDURES**

This item has been placed on the Committee's agenda for discussion as part of the business calendar. The following procedures are recommended in the consideration of this item:

- 1) Receive verbal presentation from staff and any comments from the audience.
- 2) Discuss item and provide feedback as requested.

Respectfully,



Priscilla Mumpower  
Assistant Executive Officer

Attachments:

- 1. Memo Re: Legislative Proposals
- 2. Proposed Draft Bill Language

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## **Empowering Local Action on Consolidation: Strengthening Water and Wastewater Services through LAFCO Leadership**

### **Background**

State policymakers and regulators have prioritized water system consolidation as an important tool for addressing chronic water access challenges, particularly among small water systems. Through these efforts, California has successfully consolidated over 250 water systems, with many more projects currently underway. While California promotes consolidation, the essential local-level implementation of these projects depends on county LAFCOs. These commissions play a critical role in reviewing and approving all projects that alter local government boundaries (which most water system consolidations do, see [Dobbin et al. 2021](#)). Yet despite shared goals for advancing efficient and equitable service provision, there has been little coordination between state and local regulators on consolidation as a critical human right to water solution. These proposals are being advanced by LAFCO and Environmental Justice stakeholders to help align state and local roles to collaboratively advance community-driven water system consolidations.

### **Our Proposals**

#### **1. Empower LAFCOs to Initiate Jurisdictional Changes or Extraterritorial Services Under Certain Conditions**

*Challenge:* For services to be extended from a local government service provider to a surrounding settlement, annexation is often required. Alternatively, an extraterritorial service agreement can be pursued. LAFCOs currently have the ability, and related authority, to initiate dissolutions, mergers, establish subsidiary districts, form new districts, and dissolve districts under certain circumstances and when informed by a report called a Municipal Service Review (MSR). LAFCO also approves all annexation and extraterritorial service agreement applications. However, unlike the above-named actions, they do not have the authority to initiate annexation or extraterritorial service. Allowing LAFCOs to initiate is a crucial tool for advancing consolidations that lack a capable applicant, often due to lack of resources.

*Solution:* Amend California Government Code 56375(a) and its enumeration of LAFCO initiating powers to include jurisdictional changes and extraterritorial service agreements necessary to provide timely water or wastewater services consistent with community needs and documented public health or safety concerns while including conditional approval authority by amending Government Code 56133.

*Use case example:* Santa Cruz LAFCO developed an MSR that analyzed all water districts and private water systems in the county. Their findings suggested that many of the water districts should consider annexing areas within their sphere boundaries. While some water districts were interested in doing so, they lacked the time or staffing to initiate the process. If LAFCO had the

power to initiate annexation, they would be able to make the initial filings to pursue these consolidations on the behalf of the districts and underserved residents.

## **2. Amplify the Role of Municipal Service Reports (MSRs) in Communicating Community Needs**

*Challenge:* MSRs are the public service report-cards for California municipal agencies providing basic services, including those who serve disadvantaged unincorporated communities. These reports are often the *only place* where the efficiency, equity and sustainability of resident services are evaluated. LAFCOs invest significant time and resources into producing these reports, and recommendations from an MSR should play a vital role in local planning. However, because there are no required hearings, these reports are often shelved and left unseen by affected agencies and county leaders.

*Solution:* Amend California Government Code 56430 and its provisions on preparing municipal service reviews to require LAFCOs to take up these studies at noticed hearings as well as require the affected agencies to formally receive the studies at their own noticed hearing and provide confirmation in doing so back to LAFCOs.

## **3. Increase Awareness of Service Needs for Mutual Water Companies and Mobile Home Parks**

*Challenge:* Mobile Home Parks (MHPs) and Mutual Water Companies (MWCs) are common drinking water providers that serve many California residents. These systems also disproportionately struggle to provide safe, sustainable drinking water, even when compared to other small systems (see [Pierce and Gonzalez, 2017](#); [Dobbin and Fencel, 2021](#)). While both LAFCOs and the California Public Utilities Commission oversee and approve service boundary changes for water systems within their jurisdictions, MHPs and MWCs are not overseen by either. This lack of oversight results in insufficient data collection and limited opportunities for public discussion, severely hindering consolidation planning for these systems. While LAFCOs do not regulate these systems, their existence as service providers within the vicinity of LAFCO reviewed cities and special districts merits attention as part of the water services review process. Including MWCs and MHPs in MSRs would make these reviews more comprehensive. Doing so would also align MSRs to support standing county drought task forces, now mandatory under SB 552.

*Solution:* Amend Government Code Section 56430 to add a requirement for MSRs to identify MHP and MWC service providers nearby reviewed local agencies service providers and amend the Health and Safety Code to allow LAFCOs to request information from Mobile Home Parks in the same way as Mutual Water Companies.

**Proposed Draft**  
**\*\*\*\*\*Unofficial Copy\*\*\*\*\***

An act to amend Sections 56375, 56133 and 56430 of the Government Code, relating to local government.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS

SECTION 1. Section 56375 of the Government Code is amended to read:

56375. The commission shall have all of the following powers and duties subject to any limitations upon its jurisdiction set forth in this part:

(a) (1) To review and approve with or without amendment, wholly, partially, or conditionally, or disapprove proposals for changes of organization or reorganization, consistent with written policies, procedures, and guidelines adopted by the commission.

(2) The commission may initiate proposals by resolution of application for any of the following:

(A) The consolidation of a district, as defined in Section 56036.

(B) The dissolution of a district.

(C) A merger.

(D) The establishment of a subsidiary district.

(E) The formation of a new district or districts.

(F) A reorganization that includes any of the changes specified in subparagraph (A), (B), (C), (D), or (E).

(G) The reorganization of territory to a city or district or exterritorial services described in paragraph (3).

(GH) The dissolution of an inactive district pursuant to Section 56879.

(HI) The dissolution of a district pursuant to Section 56375.1.

(3) A commission may initiate a proposal or request described in paragraph (2)(F) only if that change organization, reorganization, or exterritorial service directly facilitates the provision of water or wastewater in response to a documented public health and safety threat to the community, as determined by the commission.

(A) In determining the applicability of a documented public health and safety threat, the commission shall prioritize information provided by any of the following:

(i) The State Water Resources Control Board including related to potential water system consolidations under Health and Safety Code Section 116682.

(ii) Regional water Quality Control Board

(iii) The applicable county department of public health

(iv) The applicable Local Primacy Agency

(B) Prior to taking action, the commission shall host at least one meeting in a place as close as feasible to the affected community and consider the level of support for the reorganization among residents of the affected community.

(C) Based on the documented public health and safety threat to the community the commission may petition the State Water Resources Control Board to consider ordering consolidation under Section 116682 of the Health and Safety Code.

(34) A commission may initiate a proposal described in paragraph (2) only if that change of organization or reorganization is consistent with a recommendation or conclusion of a study prepared pursuant to Section 56378, 56425, or 56430, and the commission makes the determinations specified in subdivision (b) of Section 56881.

(45) A commission shall not disapprove an annexation to a city, initiated by resolution, of contiguous territory that the commission finds is any of the following:

(A) Surrounded or substantially surrounded by the city to which the annexation is proposed or by that city and a county boundary or the Pacific Ocean if the territory to be annexed is substantially developed or developing, is not prime agricultural land as defined in Section 56064, is designated for urban growth by the general plan of the annexing city, and is not within the sphere of influence of another city.

(B) Located within an urban service area that has been delineated and adopted by a commission, which is not prime agricultural land, as defined by Section 56064, and is designated for urban growth by the general plan of the annexing city.

(C) An annexation or reorganization of unincorporated islands meeting the requirements of Section 56375.3.

(56) As a condition to the annexation of an area that is surrounded, or substantially surrounded, by the city to which the annexation is proposed, the commission may require, where consistent with the purposes of this division, that the annexation include the entire island of surrounded, or substantially surrounded, territory.

(67) A commission shall not impose any conditions that would directly regulate land use density or intensity, property development, or subdivision requirements.

(78) The decision of the commission with regard to a proposal to annex territory to a city shall be based upon the general plan and rezoning of the city. When the development purposes are not made known to the annexing city, the annexation shall be reviewed on the basis of the adopted plans and policies of the annexing city or county. A commission shall require, as a condition to annexation, that a city rezone the territory to be annexed or present evidence satisfactory to the commission that the existing development entitlements on the territory are vested or are already at build-out, and are consistent with the city's general plan. However, the commission shall not specify how, or in what manner, the territory shall be rezoned.

(89) (A) Except for those changes of organization or reorganization authorized under Section 56375.3, and except as provided by subparagraph (B), a commission shall not approve an annexation to a city of any territory greater than 10 acres, or smaller as determined by commission policy, where there exists a disadvantaged unincorporated community that is contiguous to the area of proposed annexation, unless an application to annex the disadvantaged unincorporated community to the subject city has been filed with the executive officer.

(B) An application to annex a contiguous disadvantaged unincorporated community shall not be required if either of the following apply:

(i) A prior application for annexation of the same disadvantaged unincorporated community has been made in the preceding five years.

(ii) The commission finds, based upon written evidence, that a majority of the registered voters within the affected territory are opposed to annexation.

(C) This paragraph shall also apply to the annexation of two or more contiguous areas that take place within five years of each other and that are individually less than 10 acres but cumulatively more than 10 acres.

(b) With regard to a proposal for annexation or detachment of territory to, or from, a city or district or with regard to a proposal for reorganization that includes annexation or detachment, to determine whether territory proposed for annexation or detachment, as described in its resolution approving the annexation, detachment, or reorganization, is inhabited or uninhabited.

(c) With regard to a proposal for consolidation of two or more cities or districts, to determine which city or district shall be the consolidated successor city or district.

(d) To approve the annexation of unincorporated, noncontiguous territory, subject to the limitations of Section 56742, located in the same county as that in which the city is located, and that is owned by a city and used for municipal purposes and to authorize the annexation of the territory without notice and hearing.

(e) To approve the annexation of unincorporated territory consistent with the planned and probable use of the property based upon the review of general plan and rezoning designations. No subsequent change may be made to the general plan for the annexed territory or zoning that is not in conformance to the rezoning designations for a period of two years after the completion

of the annexation, unless the legislative body for the city makes a finding at a public hearing with written notice provided no less than 21 days to the commission that a substantial change has occurred in circumstances that necessitate a departure from the rezoning in the application to the commission.

(f) With respect to the incorporation of a new city or the formation of a new special district, to determine the number of registered voters residing within the proposed city or special district or, for a landowner-voter special district, the number of owners of land and the assessed value of their land within the territory proposed to be included in the new special district. The number of registered voters shall be calculated as of the time of the last report of voter registration by the county elections official to the Secretary of State prior to the date the first signature was affixed to the petition. The executive officer shall notify the petitioners of the number of registered voters resulting from this calculation. The assessed value of the land within the territory proposed to be included in a new landowner-voter special district shall be calculated as shown on the last equalized assessment roll.

(g) To adopt written procedures for the evaluation of proposals, including written definitions consistent with existing state law. The commission may adopt standards for any of the factors enumerated in Section 56668. Any standards adopted by the commission shall be written.

(h) To adopt standards and procedures for the evaluation of service plans submitted pursuant to Section 56653 and the initiation of a change of organization or reorganization pursuant to subdivision (a).

(i) To make and enforce regulations for the orderly and fair conduct of hearings by the commission.

(j) To incur usual and necessary expenses for the accomplishment of its functions.

(k) To appoint and assign staff personnel and to employ or contract for professional or consulting services to carry out and effect the functions of the commission.

(l) To review the boundaries of the territory involved in any proposal with respect to the definiteness and certainty of those boundaries, the nonconformance of proposed boundaries with lines of assessment or ownership, and other similar matters affecting the proposed boundaries.

(m) To waive the restrictions of Section 56744 if it finds that the application of the restrictions would be detrimental to the orderly development of the community and that the area that would be enclosed by the annexation or incorporation is so located that it cannot reasonably be annexed to another city or incorporated as a new city.

(n) To waive the application of Section 22613 of the Streets and Highways Code if it finds the application would deprive an area of a service needed to ensure the health, safety, or welfare of the residents of the area and if it finds that the waiver would not affect the ability of a city to provide any service. However, within 60 days of the inclusion of the territory within the city, the legislative body may adopt a resolution nullifying the waiver.

(o) If the proposal includes the incorporation of a city, as defined in Section 56043, or the formation of a district, as defined in Section 2215 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, the commission shall determine the property tax revenue to be exchanged by the affected local agencies pursuant to Section 56810. If the proposal includes the disincorporation of a city, as defined in Section 56034, the commission shall determine the property tax revenue to be exchanged by the affected local agencies pursuant to Section 56813.

(p) To authorize a city or district to provide new or extended services outside its jurisdictional boundaries pursuant to Section 56133.

(q) To enter into an agreement with the commission for an adjoining county for the purpose of determining procedures for the consideration of proposals that may affect the adjoining county or where the jurisdiction of an affected agency crosses the boundary of the adjoining county.

(r) To approve with or without amendment, wholly, partially, or conditionally, or disapprove pursuant to this section the annexation of territory served by a mutual water company formed pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 14300) of Division 3 of Title 1 of the Corporations Code that operates a public water system to a city or special district. Any annexation approved in accordance with this subdivision shall be subject to the state and federal constitutional prohibitions against the taking of private property without the payment of just compensation. This subdivision shall not impair the authority of a public agency or public utility to exercise eminent domain authority.

SECTION 2. Section 56133 of the Government Code is amended to read:

(a) A city or district may provide new or extended services by contract or agreement outside its jurisdictional boundary only if it first requests and receives written approval from the commission of the county in which the affected territory is located.

(b) The commission may initiate proceedings for a city or district to provide new or extended services by contract or agreement outside its jurisdictional boundary under the circumstances described in Section 56375(a)(3).

~~(b)~~ (c) The commission may authorize a city or district to provide new or extended services outside its jurisdictional boundary but within its sphere of influence in anticipation of a later change of organization.

~~(c)~~ (d) The commission may authorize a city or district to provide new or extended services outside its jurisdictional boundary and outside its sphere of influence to respond to an existing or impending threat to the health or safety of the public or the residents of the affected territory and determinations of available and adequate service to the affected territory, if both of the following requirements are met:

(1) The entity applying for approval has provided the commission with documentation of a threat to the health and safety of the public or the affected residents.

(2) The commission has notified any alternate service provider, including any water corporation as defined in Section 241 of the Public Utilities Code, that has filed a map and a statement of its service capabilities with the commission.

~~(d)~~ (e) The executive officer, within 30 days of receipt of a request for approval by a city or district to extend services outside its jurisdictional boundary, shall determine whether the request is complete and acceptable for filing or whether the request is incomplete. If a request is determined not to be complete, the executive officer shall immediately transmit that determination to the requester, specifying those parts of the request that are incomplete and the manner in which they can be made complete. When the request is deemed complete, the executive officer shall place the request on the agenda of the next commission meeting for which adequate notice can be given but not more than 90 days from the date that the request is deemed complete, unless the commission has delegated approval of requests made pursuant to this section to the executive officer. The commission or executive officer shall approve, disapprove, or approve with conditions the extended services. If the new or extended services are disapproved or approved with conditions, the applicant may request reconsideration, citing the reasons for reconsideration.

~~(e)~~ (f) This section does not apply to any of the following:

(1) Two or more public agencies where the public service to be provided is an alternative to, or substitute for, public services already being provided by an existing public service provider and where the level of service to be provided is consistent with the level of service contemplated by

the existing service provider.

(2) The transfer of nonpotable or nontreated water.

(3) The provision of surplus water to agricultural lands and facilities, including, but not limited to, incidental residential structures, for projects that serve conservation purposes or that directly support agricultural industries. However, prior to extending surplus water service to any project that will support or induce development, the city or district shall first request and receive written approval from the commission in the affected county.

(4) An extended service that a city or district was providing on or before January 1, 2001.

(5) A local publicly owned electric utility, as defined by Section 224.3 of the Public Utilities Code, providing electric services that do not involve the acquisition, construction, or installation of electric distribution facilities by the local publicly owned electric utility, outside of the utility's jurisdictional boundary.

(6) A fire protection contract, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 56134.

SECTION 3. Section 56430 of the Government Code is amended to read:

(a) In order to prepare and to update spheres of influence in accordance with Section 56425, the commission shall conduct a service review of the municipal services provided in the county or other appropriate area designated by the commission. The commission shall include in the area designated for service review the county, the region, the subregion, or any other geographic area as is appropriate for an analysis of the service or services to be reviewed, and shall prepare a written statement of its determinations with respect to each of the following:

(1) Growth and population projections for the affected area.

(2) The location and characteristics of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence.

(3) Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies including needs or deficiencies related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, and structural fire protection in any disadvantaged, unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence.

(4) Financial ability of agencies to provide services.

(5) Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.

(6) Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies.

(7) Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy.

(b) In conducting a service review, the commission shall comprehensively review all of the agencies that provide the identified service or services within the designated geographic area. The commission may assess various alternatives for improving efficiency and affordability of infrastructure and service delivery within and contiguous to the sphere of influence, including, but not limited to, the consolidation of governmental agencies.

(c) In conducting a service review related to drinking water or wastewater services, the commission shall to the best of their ability identify all regulated providers of the relevant service within or adjacent to the applicable spheres of influence of the reviewed agencies in Section 56430(b)

(ed) In conducting a service review, the commission may include a review of whether the agencies under review, including any public water system as defined in Section 116275, are in compliance with the California Safe Drinking Water Act (Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 116270) of Part 12 of Division 104 of the Health and Safety Code). A public water system may satisfy any request for information as to compliance with that act by submission of the consumer confidence or water quality report prepared by the public water system as provided by Section 116470 of the Health and Safety Code.

(~~d~~e) The commission may request information, as part of a service review under this section, from identified public or private entities that provide wholesale or retail supply of drinking water, including mutual water companies formed pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 14300) of Division 3 of Title 1 of the Corporations Code, mobile home parks formed pursuant to Part 2.1 (commencing with Section 18200) of Division 13 of the Health and Safety Code, and private utilities, as defined in Section 1502 of the Public Utilities Code.

(~~e~~f) The commission shall conduct a service review before, or in conjunction with, but no later than the time it is considering an action to establish a sphere of influence in accordance with Section 56425 or 56426.5 or to update a sphere of influence pursuant to Section 56425.

(f)The commission shall conduct a public hearing for which notice has been published, to consider the service review and written determinations prepared under subdivision (a). Notice of the public hearing shall be provided to agencies that provide one or more services evaluated in the review.

(g)The commission shall notify in writing all agencies that provide one or more services evaluated in the municipal service review within 30 days following the commission's adoption, approval, or otherwise concluding action on the written determinations prepared under subdivision (a). The notification shall include a listing of the written determinations made by the commission.

(1) Agencies receiving notification must review the communications, including the relevant written determinations at a noticed public meeting.

(2) Agencies must transmit to LAFCo written confirmation that they have received the review in a public meeting within 6 months.

(3) Agencies which fail to transmit written confirmation with the commission required by this section within one calendar year of notice by the executive officer shall not thereafter, and until those conformations are completed, issue any bonds or incur indebtedness of any kind.

SECTION 4. Section XXXX of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

(a) No later than December 31, 2026, each mobile home park that operates a public water system shall submit to the local agency formation commission for its county a map depicting the approximate boundaries of the property that mobile home park serves.

(b) A mobile home park that operates a public water system shall respond to a request from a local agency formation commission, located within a county that the mobile home park operates in, for information in connection with the preparation of municipal service reviews or spheres of influence pursuant to Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 56425) of Part 2 of Division 3 of Title 5 of the Government Code within 45 days of the request. The mobile home park shall provide all reasonably available nonconfidential information relating to the operation of the public water system. The mobile home park shall explain, in writing, why any requested information is not reasonably available. The mobile home park shall not be required to disclose any information pertaining to the names, addresses, or water usage of any specific shareholder. This subdivision shall not be interpreted to require a mobile home park to undertake any study or investigation. A mobile home park may comply with this section by submitting to the local agency formation commission the same information that the mobile home park submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board Division of Drinking Water.