



ZONE 3 ADVISORY COMMITTEE

San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District

September 30, 2015

San Luis Obispo County
Board of Supervisors
County Government Center
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

Subject: Supplemental Water to Ensure Health and Safety

Dear Supervisors,

For nearly 50 years, Lopez Lake has been an integral component of the south county water resources portfolio and for the first time in its history, deliveries to the Zone 3 agencies have been reduced. Additionally, the Zone 3 agencies' other water supply sources have been severely impacted as well. The Zone 3 Advisory Committee recommends, and believes it is imperative, that the Board of Supervisors holds a study session to investigate and evaluate emergency water supply options that could be used to provide the south county residents with supplemental water to ensure that health and safety needs can be met as the drought persists.

Along with reductions in available Lopez water, groundwater levels are also declining. Since 2009, when evidence of seawater intrusion was detected in the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin, the Zone 3 agencies that rely upon the basin have been forced to limit their pumping to approximately 30% of their groundwater entitlements to protect this critical water supply. Additionally, in 2014 and 2015 State Water Project Allocations have been at unprecedented levels. Therefore, it is imperative that emergency sources of water are identified and secured to ensure that the Zone 3 and other south county agencies can continue to supply safe, reliable drinking water.

We appreciate the County's efforts to continue investigation of potential desalination options for San Luis Obispo County and look forward to additional information about the potential Diablo Desal project. The Zone 3 Technical Advisory and Advisory Committees have also been investigating and evaluating emergency water supply options that could be implemented to assist agencies in the continuing drought. Through this effort, we have developed a preliminary list of potential options and utilized a systematic screening and ranking process to evaluate them. We look forward to sharing and discussing the results of these evaluations with the Board.

The large amount of time and energy devoted to flood control and habitat conservation has also diverted attention away from efforts to improve our preparedness. For well over a decade, the Zone 3 communities have been responding to and evaluating environmental water needs, and funding the preparation of a Habitat Conservation Plan for species dependent on water

from Lopez Reservoir. Extensive work by the County has also covered flood control needs along Arroyo Grande creek, although delays continue with state and federal permitting agencies. These lengthy and resource intensive issues have redirected work efforts and funding from maintaining secure and reliable water supplies for our communities. The emergency is now upon us and we must look closely at our preparedness for continued drought. We have to move expediently to identify emergency supplies and improve overall regional water supply reliability.

Clean and affordable water is needed for families, businesses, and agriculture and the role of counties throughout California is growing as the state legislature establishes new visions for water resources management, and as local communities need leadership and regional collaboration. We understand that local community leaders are responsible to meet the needs of their respective communities. Nevertheless, the County of San Luis Obispo has long promoted collaboration, and as the single agency with the greatest options, we believe that a Board workshop will be important to identify options and to provide staff with direction so that all agencies can coordinate and collaborate while developing solutions and actions. We hope you agree and will work to schedule time on your agenda in the near future.

Sincerely,



PAAVO OGREN
Chair, Zone 3 Advisory Committee

c: Dan Buckshi, County Administrator
Zone 3 Advisory Committee

File: CF 340.120.02 Zone 3 Advisory Committee - Correspondence/Claims

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