



To: cr_board_clerk Clerk Recorder/ClerkRec/COSLO@Wings,
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: Fw: Paso Basin water issues - Consent item on April 5th regarding March 8, 2016 Special Election
From: Debbie Arnold/BOS/COSLO - Monday 04/04/2016 04:29 PM
Sent by: Jennifer Caffee/BOS/COSLO

Debbie Arnold
Supervisor, 5th District
San Luis Obispo County

----- Forwarded by Jennifer Caffee/BOS/COSLO on 04/04/2016 04:29 PM -----

From: "Sue Luft" <luftsue@gmail.com>
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Date: 04/03/2016 09:56 PM
Subject: Paso Basin water issues - Consent item on April 5th regarding March 8, 2016 Special Election

Chair Compton
Supervisor Arnold
Supervisor Gibson
Supervisor Hill
Supervisor Mecham

Supervisors,

On Tuesday, your Board will hear the results of the March 8th Special Elections. The voters have clearly stated that they do not want the Paso Robles Basin Water District and they do not want to pay for management of the basin by either the Paso Robles Basin Water District or the SLO County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (FCD). In spite of statements by some people otherwise, the voters did not indicate that they do not want Sacramento to control the basin. The voters effectively left the management to the State because they did not approve the funding for local management of the basin.

Your Board has three choices at the point, as well as a very limited time to make your decision. The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requires that a Groundwater Sustainability Agency/Agencies (GSA) be in place by June, 2017. Since there are other entities within the basin who must be coordinated with, a number of months will be needed to get the Memoranda of Understanding and/or Joint Powers Authority into place. The direction the County intends to head certainly needs to be decided by this summer.

The three choices are: 1) Another Proposition 218 vote for funding of SGMA compliance by

the FCD, 2) Funding of SGMA compliance for the Paso Basin by pulling funding from other programs/projects in the county, or 3) Allowing the State to manage the basin. As you know, a long term funding source is required for SGMA compliance. Your professional staff, with the help of a competent consulting firm, determined that \$925,000 would be needed annually for basin management. Some grant funding is available under Proposition 1 for development of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). However, these grants require a 50% match, application preparation, regular reporting, etc. Grants do not cover long term management.

Groundwater levels are still declining in the basin. The change in storage in the basin (overdraft) is now on the order of 6,500 AFY (2,400 AFY as of 2011, 26,200 AFY in 2040, assuming decline is linear). Keep in mind that the computer model estimates are based on rainfall data from 1981 through 2011, and do not take into account the current five-year drought. The overdraft of the basin increases each year since no solutions are in place to change this situation.

An analysis of recent well drilling data supplied by the County Department of Environmental Health indicates that 141 domestic wells were replaced during 2011-2015. This number doesn't address agricultural wells that needed replacement. A total of 358 wells were drilled in the Paso Basin during this timeframe. An unknown number of well pumps have been lowered and some people are trucking water to their homes.

SGMA prohibits use of the AB 3030 Plan as the GSP. Although there is some information in that plan which can be incorporated into the GSP, the AB 3030 Plan is a voluntary plan which has not resulted in any reduction in the groundwater decline. Early in its existence, the Blue Ribbon Committee determined that basin management with "teeth" was needed. Mandatory reductions in pumping, as well as an entity to provide supplemental water is clearly needed.

If your Board decides to manage the basin, there are a number of commitments which your Board needs to make. First, metering of all large water users needs to be initiated now. Without accurate water usage data, the basin cannot be managed. Since an ordinance generally takes 18 months to two years to move through the County process, your Board should direct staff to begin preparation of a metering ordinance.

If a "fair distribution of water" is to be achieved, this will not be by physical connections to supply water throughout the basin. It will only come from groundwater enhancements (supplemental water, improved aquifer recharge) and pumping restrictions. Allocations based on water use type, crop type, available rainfall, subarea or other appropriate method must be established. If the County is to manage the basin, your Board will be determining the appropriate allocations of water for each water user. Pumping restrictions will need to be established and enforced.

Your Board also needs to partner with Paso for use of their recycled water, which needs to

be combined with Nacimiento water in order to be of acceptable water quality. A project to pump this combined water east of Paso to where it can best help the basin needs to begin as soon as possible. Aquifer recharge projects, whether by use of Nacimiento water, State Water, or by better management of flows through the Huer Huero and Estrella Rivers, need to be initiated as soon as possible. The Paso Basin Advisory Committee and the Blue Ribbon Committee studied these solutions. Now, the solutions need to be implemented.

Management of the basin means stopping the decline in groundwater levels and stabilizing the levels. Preparing and submitting a GSP is only part of what is required. Making the hard decisions and affecting positive change in basin levels is necessary.

If your Board does not have the political will to do what is necessary to properly manage the basin, please ask the State to take this responsibility as soon as possible.

Please do not ignore the needs of the water users in the Paso Basin. It is in your hands and time is passing quickly.

Sue Luft
Rural El Pomar resident and landowner