

ALAB MEETING MINUTES

Monday, June 6, 2016

Members and Alternates Present: Melanie Blankenship, Sarah Kramer, Lisen Bonnier, Don Warden, Dan Rodrigues, Robert Hartzell, Tom Ikeda, Claire Wineman, Jerry Diefenderfer, Dick Nock, David Pruitt, Joe Plummer, Nicki Anderson

Staff Present: Carolyn Berg, Dick Tzou – San Luis Obispo County Public Works, Marc Lea, Lynda Auchinachie – San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture

Absent Members: Greg France, Mark Pearce, Jean-Pierre Wolff, Chuck Pritchard, Richard Hawley, Mark Battany, Kaylee Ellis, Sandra Fischbein, Joy Fitzhugh

Guests Present: Patricia Wilmore – Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance

1. Call to Order: 6:30 Vice Chair Blankenship

2. Open Comment:

- Melanie Blankenship shared with ALAB members her concern regarding grading activities associated with the development of an irrigation reservoir and vineyard off of Willow Creek Road, west of Templeton. Melanie indicated it was a Resnick project and that significant amounts of oak woodland habitat had been removed. Marc Lea provided photos. Melanie asked staff how this was allowed when mitigation is required to remove just one oak when building a house. Lynda Auchinachie provided ALAB members with a general background of the county's agriculture grading ordinance and the option for agriculturalists to use the Alternative Review Program for reservoirs through the RCD. Lynda indicated that the reservoir project was submitted to the Upper Salinas-Las Tablas RCD for Alternative Review and this process replaces the requirement for a county grading permit. Lynda indicated she did not know any specifics about the project outside application submittal that was reviewed to ensure the reservoir was for agricultural purposes. Lynda reminded ALAB members that there are permit exemptions for agricultural grading activities that do not exist for other types of grading.
- Patricia Wilmore indicated that several Alliance members had commented on the grading activities. Patricia shared that she felt that if they have the right permits then the activities are okay.
- Claire Wineman encouraged all ALAB members to be cautious on messaging because the agriculture grading exemptions could be taken away.

3. Announcements from ALAB Members & County Ag Department Staff Updates:

- Marc Lea Indicated that Dan Rodrigues and Nicki Anderson will be officially confirmed by the Board of Supervisors on June 21, 2016. Marc also shared that ALAB's letter regarding interest in being involved in the SGMA process had been sent to the BOS;

plans to regionally manage the Asian Citrus Psyllid continue to be developed; and medicinal marijuana will be discussed again at the BOS in July.

4. **Previous Minutes: MOTION: Rodrigues** Approve May 2, 2016: **Motion 2nd: Ikeda**
Approved: Unanimous by all voting members. No “No” votes.
5. **Current status on the countywide implementation of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)** – Carolyn Berg Senior Water Resources Engineer, San Luis Obispo County Public Works

- Carolyn Berg introduced Dick Tzou from Public Works Water Resources Division and emphasized that they are looking for input and ideas on how to incorporate agricultural interests throughout the SGMA process. Carolyn provided an overview of SGMA that included Water Resources Management, SGMA State Actions, Local SGMA Strategy, and SGMA Strategy Implementation.
http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Assets/AG/ALAB/SGMA_Presentation_2016_06_06.pdf
- Highlights included identifying the five basins (Paso Robles, Cuyama, Santa Maria, Los Osos, and San Luis Obispo Valley) that are either high or medium priority and therefore require a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) be established by June 30, 2017, and a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) by January 1, 2020 for each of the five basins. Carolyn also indicated that the BOS had directed Public Works staff to continue to coordinate with eligible entities and stakeholders to facilitate the establishment of GSAs for each basin. Carolyn presented the strategies for each of the five basins and identified the potential entities for GSA formation. Carolyn acknowledged that there are many challenges to achieving the goal of sustainable groundwater and ensuring thriving economies and healthy communities.
- Dan Rodrigues asked for clarity on the exemption of adjudicated basins. Carolyn Berg shared that the legislation listed 29 adjudicated basins (including Santa Maria and Los Osos) that were exempt from SGMA if certain requirements were met. The assumption is that the adjudicated process is leading towards groundwater sustainability. There could be potential changes in the law to clarify that the court must work toward SGMA compliance. Annual reports are required for adjudicated basins.
- Claire Wineman asked if mutual water companies are subject to the Brown Act. Carolyn indicated that they are not but if they were part of a GSA they would need to aim for transparency and engage the public.
- Jerry Diefenderfer expressed frustration that the state bill, passed as a trailer, was voted on with no public input and timelines that are impossible to meet.
- Carolyn Berg indicated that staff will aim to meet the deadlines and that the State is providing funding for facilitators to help with GSA formation. Carolyn shared that she is optimistic based on the success she is experiencing with the facilitation process in Monterey County. Carolyn believes that if substantial progress has been made towards establishing a GSA the state may extend the deadlines. If substantial progress has not

been made and a deadline is missed the state would step into the role of GSA.

- Claire Wineman inquired about draft regulations. Carolyn informed ALAB members that there were no regulations for GSA formation, however, there were regulations adopted for how to write a GSP if you have multiple GSAs over a basin. Carolyn indicated there are explicit technical requirements for data collection and monitoring. If there is more than one GSA they must share data and make modeling information public. The GSAs must lead to sustainability for an entire basin.
- Patricia Wilmore shared that there is a proposal for a CA Water District in the Shandon area. If this water district is formed, it could be its own GSA or join with other entities.
- Claire Wineman asked if such a water district goes just to LAFCO or if state legislation would be required. Carolyn Berg explained that a CA Water District is “off the shelf” and just goes through LAFCO process. Paso Robles required state legislation because proposal was not already written in code.
- Claire Wineman raised concerns that facilitators often have personal bias against agriculture and requested Public Works ensure this is not the case. Carolyn Berg and Dick Tzou agreed that the facilitators should not have a personal bias. Carolyn indicated the facilitators they are interviewing have decades of experience in facilitation and have spent the past several months working with several other basin entities throughout the state.
- Carolyn Berg concluded by asking ALAB members how they would like to be involved. Carolyn suggested joining SGMA email list, helping to identify critical stakeholders and agricultural interests, attending basin outreach events, and providing input to BOS on key decisions.
- Claire Wineman emphasized it is really important to make BOS hearing dates available to the public as early as possible. Claire reiterated her desire that agricultural stakeholders have voting participation on a designated GSA. Claire concluded with requesting that facilitators not mischaracterize conclusions or idea of consensus and be mindful when describing process and advice.
- Jerry Diefenderfer asked how the failed attempt to form a water district over the Paso Robles basin would be described to the facilitators. ALAB members discussed this issue and many members agreed that there was substantial confusion surrounding the water district vote. Jerry emphasized the need for education moving forward with the SGMA process.
- Robert Hartzell indicated the need for the Agricultural Commissioner to be more involved and have a voting role.

6. Future Agenda Items:

Water policy, H2-A farmworker issues

Next meeting – July 11, 2016

Meeting Adjourned: 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Auchinachie, County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures