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February 3, 2010

Dr. Monica Hunter
Senior Program Advisor, Central Coast Watersheds Program
Planning and Conservation League Foundation

Subject: Land-to-Sea Advisory Committee WRAC Discussion Group

Dear Dr. Hunter:

The Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC) would like to thank Coast and Ocean Regional Roundtable (CORRT) representatives for attending both its July 1 and October 7, 2009 meetings to promote the idea of forming a Land-to-Sea Advisory Committee (LTSA) and to investigate whether the WRAC could be expanded to meet the objectives of such a committee as described by the Joint Oceans Committee Initiative report "One Coast, One Future". As you know, the WRAC formed an ad-hoc committee to discuss this topic, which met on January 11, 2010. The ad-hoc committee's report to the WRAC is attached for your review.

The WRAC is supportive of protecting the health of coastal freshwater and ocean ecosystems by reducing the impact of land uses and development on water quality. However, with the WRAC being an advisory body to the County Board of Supervisors only, it would not be able to meet the objectives of a LTSA in advising other local, state and federal agencies or facilitating inter-county discussions. Therefore, the WRAC cannot be expanded effectively to incorporate the LTSA.

The WRAC does address other objectives of the proposed LTSA that may support such a committee if it were to be formed, as discussed in the attached report. The ad-hoc committee also had some suggestions for CORRT representatives should efforts in forming a LTSA move forward.

Respectfully,

MICHAEL WINN
Chairperson, Water Resources Advisory Committee

cc: SLO County Board of Supervisors w/attachments

Attachment: February 3, 2010 WRAC Staff Report

Purpose of the Committee:

To advise the County Board of Supervisors concerning all policy decisions relating to the water resources of the SLO County Flood Control & Water Conservation District. To recommend to the Board specific water resource programs. To recommend methods of financing water resource programs.

Excerpts from WRAC By-Laws dated 3/6/07

TO: Water Resources Advisory Committee
FROM: Courtney Howard, SLO County Water Resources Engineer
DATE: February 3, 2010
SUBJECT: Agenda Item #5: Land-to-Sea Advisory Committee Discussion Group

Recommendation

Review ways the WRAC can support, rather than expand to become, a potential Land-to-Sea Advisory Committee, and provide a copy of this report with a cover letter to Coast and Ocean Regional Roundtable Project representatives.

Discussion

The ad hoc committee met on January 11, 2010, to discuss the idea of a Land-to-Sea Advisory Committee (LTSA) with a representative of the Coast and Ocean Regional Roundtable Project (CORRT). Participants included District 2 Member Bill Garfinkel, District 3 Member Marilee Hyman, Camp San Luis Obispo Member John Reid, District 4 Member Mike Winn, and Public Works staff Courtney Howard. Unfortunately, a CORRT representative did not attend the meeting. The group decided to proceed with discussing the idea, utilizing materials provided during the CORRT representative's presentations to the WRAC.

With the WRAC being an advisory body to the County Board of Supervisors only, it would not be able to meet the objectives of a LTSA in advising other local, state and federal agencies or facilitating inter-county discussions. Therefore, the WRAC cannot be expanded effectively to incorporate the LTSA. However, the WRAC does address other objectives of the proposed LTSA that may support such a committee if it were to be formed.

Making the Land to Sea connection: Recommend ways that existing codes and ordinances can adequately protect the health of coastal freshwater and ocean ecosystems, focusing in particular on reducing the impact of land uses and development on water quality.

The WRAC frequently reviews and opines on County-wide policy documents and ordinances that may affect water quality originating from land uses upstream in coastal watersheds. Examples include the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plan, Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE), Biosolids Ordinance, and Stormwater Management Ordinance.

Collecting and integrating locally relevant information: Identify and facilitate the collection and integration of high quality coastal freshwater

and ocean systems information that is critical for informed local decision making.

With broad WRAC representation of entities throughout the County with water resources interests and relevant information, as well as a County water resources website, opportunities exist for information collection and integration via the WRAC. Being a public advisory body, the WRAC enables those entities that are not WRAC members also to bring forth relevant information to the broad group. It is also important to note that the new Environmental at-Large position has been filled with a representative and alternate who are knowledgeable in coastal and marine issues.

Recommend ways to creatively consolidate and rearrange existing resources through partnerships, joint ventures, networks, etc.

The WRAC is involved in the development and review of regional plans and reports that have resource optimization through partnerships, joint ventures and networks as key implementation strategies. Examples include the IRWM Plan, Master Water Plan, COSE, and Resource Management System Resource Capacity Studies.

Provide feedback on projects.

The WRAC regularly reviews and provides feedback on projects with potential regional and sub-regional water resources impacts, such as those that have creek or ocean discharge like wastewater treatment projects or desalination projects that are under County jurisdiction.

Should CORRT representatives or others proceed with forming a LTSA, it will be important to recognize the administrative requirements for a successful advisory body. It must have, among other things, a solid financing mechanism, administrative staff and a clear purpose and charge. That purpose and charge should be clearly defined prior to approaching other existing groups with the potential to have a role in the proposed LTSA.