

## ALAB MEETING MINUTES

Monday, July 6, 2015

**Members and Alternates Present:** Jean-Pierre Wolff, Eric Michielssen, Don Warden, Claire Wineman, Joy Fitzhugh, Robert Hartzell, Greg France, Sarah Kramer, Dan Rodrigues, Rick Hawley, Chuck Pritchard

**Absent Members:** David Pruitt, Lisen Bonnier, Melanie Blankenship, Mark Pearce, Tom Ikeda, Dick Nock, Jerry Diefenderfer, Neil Roberts

**Guests Present:** Patricia Wilmore –Paso Wine Country Alliance

**Staff Present:** Marc Lea, Lynda Auchinachie – San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture, Cheryl Cochran, James Caruso -San Luis Obispo County Planning Department

1. **Call to Order:** 6:04 Chair Wolff

2. **Open Comment:**

- Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff thanked Eric Michielssen for chairing June meeting in his absence.
- Patricia Wilmore shared that the Paso Wine Country Alliance commissioned an economic impact study on the Paso Robles Wine Festival. The study concluded that there was a \$2.14 million benefit to the local economy. Over 89 percent of participants were non-locals. The complete study will be available on the Paso Wine Country Alliance website soon.
- Joy Fitzhugh provided a handout identifying the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) basin boundary regulations.

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

- Marc Lea informed ALAB members that an Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) had been detected in a commercial orchard in South County. Treatment was conducted and there have been no new detections in this area. It is believed that the ACP may have arrived on harvest bins or other equipment. There has been another ACP detection in a residential area of San Luis Obispo. CDFA conducted meetings and subsequent treatment of citrus in an 800 meter radius around the find site. There are currently ACP quarantines for the Arroyo Grande/San Luis Obispo and Cayucos areas. Marc also updated ALAB members on the fact that the Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM) continues to be a concern with our trading partners in Mexico and Canada. Growers need to meet export requirements. Marc also indicated there has not been a strawberry commodity grower nominated for the new position at this time.

4. **Previous Minutes: MOTION: Pritchard** Approve June 1, 2015 minutes: **Motion: 2<sup>nd</sup>:**

**Michielssen Approved:** Unanimous by all voting members in attendance with two abstentions due to absence (Wolff, Hawley) No “No” votes.

#### **5. ALAB Input on Carbon Sequestration on Agricultural Land – James Caruso, Planning Department**

- James Caruso provided a summary of discussions that occurred at a Planning Commission hearing on the Renewable Energy Streamlining Program (RESP) back in February. James indicated that Tim LaSalle shared his positive insights and experience regarding carbon sequestration associated with rangeland. The planning commission requested a letter be drafted to send to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) encouraging carbon sequestration on agricultural lands. James indicated a letter was drafted highlighting the various policies and procedures that could be followed to support carbon sequestration. James shared that the Planning Commission did not care for the direction of the letter and a revised letter will be presented August 13, 2015. James indicated that he is open to any and all suggestions from ALAB members.
- Joy Fitzhugh recognized Tim LaSalle as a valuable resource for carbon sequestration information obtained from research in Africa and understands why the Planning Commission was supportive for the ideas he presented. However, Joy indicated her concern over proposed grazing techniques such as mob grazing (1,000 cattle in a field for one day, followed the remainder of the year) that may make sense in Africa but perhaps not locally. Joy suggested that the focus should be on a broad range of techniques for carbon sequestration and not focused on just one type. Joy emphasized that any local efforts should be voluntary not mandatory.
- Jean-Pierre Wolff highlighted various carbon sequestration projects in Salinas and Australia. Both studies demonstrated positive carbon sequestration results and marketability of incentives for agriculturalists to get paid for sustainable practices.
- ALAB members discussed the complexity of carbon sequestration associated with agriculture and recommended the Planning Commission could benefit from exploring all that is currently being done and gaining an understanding of the whole process.
- James Caruso stated he would send a draft letter for distribution to ALAB members for review and comment.

#### **6. Presentation: Countywide Water Conservation Program and DSEIR, Cheryl Cochran- Planning Department**

- Cheryl Cochran provided an update of ordinance changes made to the Agricultural Offset Clearance program by the Planning Commission: 1) an exemption was added for the replanting of the same amount of acreage of the same crop type, 2) addition of a potential de minimis exemption allowing for crop production using no more than 2.5 acre feet of water per year for sites that do not have any existing crop production and not in an area of severe decline (50 feet or greater) and resulting crop production cannot be used for offset in the future, and 3) a courtesy notice informing adjacent neighbors and agencies about the offset clearance. Cheryl indicated the next planning commission hearing will be July 30, 2015, followed by the BOS hearing on August 11, 2015.

- ALAB members discussed their many concerns about the program and raised questions regarding why there just wasn't metering required for all. Concerns included the complexity of the program, the legality of the program, the proposed de minimis exemption for 2.5 acre feet and the cumulative impacts associated with such an exemption, the potential that these requirements could be applied outside of the Paso Robles groundwater basin, the lack of consideration for use of recycled water and/or groundwater injection technology, the potential for conflicting milestones with SGMA plans, exemptions considered small creep, the potential for a greater than 1:1 offset requirement, and the potential for the requirement of a discretionary permit.
- Claire Wineman suggested ALAB members work towards consensus on issues to be raised in a letter from ALAB.
- Jean-Pierre Wolff outlined a variety of options to formulate ALAB's position.
- Claire Wineman makes a motion and Don Warden seconds (see final motion below). ALAB members discuss potential amendments to the motion that include adding recognition of the considerable time and effort Planning Commission and County Planning staff have put into improving the program and also indicating that ALAB members do not support the proposed de minimis exemption due to the lack of clarity associated with cumulative impacts. The motion makers incorporated these amendments.
- Greg France expressed his concerns for the entire proposal and indicated he does not support this type of new regulation.
- Patricia Wilmore recognized that many improvements had been made to the ordinance and cautioned that she did not want to open it up due to the possibility that any last minute changes could make the ordinance worse than the current version instead of better.

**MOTION: Wineman** ALAB should draft a letter to the Planning Commission and copy it to Planning Department staff and the Board of Supervisors stating that:

*The Agricultural Liaison Advisory Board (ALAB) members recognize and appreciate the considerable amount of time and effort that your commission and planning staff have spent on the important topic of the Countywide Water Conservation Program, particularly the Agricultural Water Offset clearance program.*

*ALAB is supportive of water conservation and good land stewardship efforts, however, ALAB members are concerned about certain components of the program and therefore cannot support the program in its current form.*

*Examples of concerns include, but are not limited to: 1) the proposed components of the Agricultural Water Offset clearance program are presently applied only to the Paso Robles groundwater basin. ALAB has concerns that this set of criteria might be expanded into other*

*areas of the County experiencing groundwater issues, and 2) ALAB does not support the proposed de minimis exemption for 2.5 acre feet of water use a year for qualifying sites due to the lack of clarity regarding the impacts associated with such an exemption on all members of the agricultural community.*

**Motion: 2<sup>nd</sup>: Warden**

**Approved:** Unanimous by all voting members in attendance. No “No” votes or abstentions.

**7. Future Agenda Items: None identified**

**Next meeting – August 3, 2015**

Meeting Adjourned: 8:18 p.m.

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