



North County Watch

Looking Out Today For Tomorrow

Mr. James L. App
City of El Paso de Robles
1000 Spring Street
Paso Robles, California

Sent Via Email: JApp@prcity.com

November 8, 2012

Dear Mr. App,

Thank you for taking the time to respond to our letter of October 18th challenging the Agricultural community to address its impact on the basin in a positive proactive way.

Our letter was the third occasion that we have publicly made this challenge to the Agricultural community as the principal pumpers in the basin. We addressed our challenge specifically to Ag because they, far and away, bear the largest responsibility. As the highest volume pumpers, the Ag community will have the greatest impact if it voluntarily moves forward to implement mandatory plans to curtail water use. Your letter on behalf of the City has been the only response we have received to date.

We appreciate your affirmation that the basin is a shared responsibility and each class of pumper must assume that responsibility and proceed to reduce pumping in a manner commensurate with their impact. We hope that our challenge will be a starting point for the Ag community to seriously and genuinely engage in addressing the imperative that they reduce their impact on the basin.

Sustainability regarding the Paso basin, which is the issue in our letter, seems apparent: balancing supply and use equitably and reversing over-draft. There may be many avenues to achieving sustainability in the basin and the Basin Committee should investigate those opportunities, but the high priority problem of well levels dropping precipitously or going dry needs to be addressed immediately to, at the very least, stop that downward trend. No amount of residential property conserving water will compensate for tens of thousands of irrigated acres and additional thousands of acres of new irrigated crops going into the basin. This trend of depletion is accelerating and, the inevitable impacts to water quality could be irreversible and extremely damaging to agriculture and the economy of the area. We consider

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this to be an emergency situation and we hope that the Ag community, as the largest impact on the basin, will respond in a manner that recognizes this emergency.

Your comments and questions, regarding agricultural practices, cropping, solutions in other areas, are important issues and we hope that you will encourage the Basin Committee to use their resources and energy to research those issues but the urgent issue remains how to rein in runaway pumping immediately. Once that solution is in place, the Ag community, in good faith, could commission an independent study of those issues as a proactive step to formulate a vision for Ag in the basin – what does the future of Ag in the basin look like, what is the highest and best use within the shared resources available.

These issues and solutions will have to be looked at cooperatively with Monterey County and the entire Salinas watershed, including the Westside. Since this is a regional problem and San Luis Obispo and Monterey counties are now part of District 33 which encompasses the entire basin and the whole Salinas River, we are in an excellent position to seek help at the state level to formulate a regional solution.

We can't stress enough the urgency of an immediate proactive solution to control over-pumping now. Thank you again for the City's interest and for taking the time to respond to our letter.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Harvey', with a long, sweeping underline.

Susan Harvey
President

CC: Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Committee