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September 21, 2010

Honorable Frank Mecham
Chairperson, Board of Supervisors
County of San Luis Obispo
976 Osos Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408-2040

Subject: Water Resources Advisory Committee Comments on the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Resource Capacity Study

Dear Chairperson Mecham:

On June 2, 2010, the Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC) formed an ad hoc subcommittee to review the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Resource Capacity Study (RCS). On August 23, 2010, the subcommittee and staff of Departments of Planning and Building and Public Works met to review the July 2010 Draft Paso Robles Groundwater Basin RCS. On September 1, 2010, the WRAC reviewed the ad hoc subcommittee's comments on the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin RCS and voted with only two (2) No votes to submit the attached comments to you for further consideration.

Ad hoc subcommittee members included Member Sue Luft (Environmental At-Large), Member Della Barrett (District 5), Alternate Member Keith Larson (El Paso de Robles), Member John Neil (Atascadero Mutual Water Company), Member Steve Sinton (District 1), Member Russ Thompson (City of Atascadero), Chairperson Mike Winn (District 4), and Member Lowell Zelinski (Agriculture At-Large). Member Luft served as subcommittee chair.

Respectfully,

MICHAEL WINN
Chairperson, Water Resources Advisory Committee

cc: SLO County Board of Supervisors
SLO County Planning Commission
James Caruso, County Department of Planning and Building

Attachment: Paso Robles Groundwater Basin RCS Subcommittee 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

WRAC Subcommittee to Review Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Resource Capacity Study

Meeting: August 23rd, 2010, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

Purpose: Review and comment on Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Resource Capacity Study, Revised July 2010

Subcommittee members:

Della Barrett, District 5
Keith Larson, City of Paso Robles
John Neil, Atascadero Mutual Water Company
Steve Sinton, District 1 – unable to attend meeting
Russ Thompson, City of Atascadero
Mike Winn, WRAC Chair, District 4
Lowell Zelinski, Agriculture at Large
Sue Luft, Environmental at Large, Subcommittee Chair

Other attendees:

Christopher Alakel, City of Paso Robles
James Caruso, SLO County Planning
Courtney Howard, SLO County Public Works

Discussion:

Subcommittee members discussed the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Resource Capacity Study (Paso Basin RCS). A consensus was reached on the following comments regarding the Paso Basin RCS.

The subcommittee strongly supports the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Resource Capacity Study, including the LOS III designations, and requests that the WRAC ask that the SLO County Board of Supervisors adopt the document, with the inclusion of the following comments.

Specific comments:

Executive Summary. Statement on Page 18 should be brought forward into the Executive Summary. “A LOS III can be established if the dependable supply will be depleted before new supplies are developed.”

Executive Summary. Add statement that, even though there are disagreements amongst experts regarding specifics, there is general agreement that the basin is nearing its safe yield, even with the introduction of water from the Nacimiento project.

Executive Summary. Reference the Peer Review as a footnote, stating in part: "The Peer Review attempts to resolve some of the apparent inconsistencies in earlier reports".

Executive Summary. Add statement that Nacimiento project will reduce some municipal pumping of groundwater.

Define and use term “safe yield” throughout document.

As with "sub-area", spell "subbasin" as "sub-basin" throughout document.

Add footnote regarding level of accuracy. See Todd 2009, page 3.

| Page 2. Last full paragraph. Due to the complexity . . . it is not currently possible . . .

| Page 4. Second bullet near bottom. Pumping report update and safe yield analysis.

Beginning on page 6. Consider using net or gross agriculture in Tables 3 through 7 for consistency. Change "Fugro's 2010" to "Fugro 2010" for consistency.

Use term "rural residential" vs. "rural" throughout document. Describe what rural residential pumping includes, possibly on page 7.

| Page 8. Second paragraph. Estimated pumping in the Atascadero sub-basin has reached 93 - 98% of its safe yield in 2006 and reached its safe yield in 2008 (Fugro-Todd, 2010).

Page 12. Item c. Revise paragraph to reflect that Nacimiento water is projected to result in a cumulative offset of approximately 67,000 acre-ft of pumping by the year 2025.

| Page 12. Item d. Increases in outflow . . . overdraft notwithstanding in spite of the introduction . . .

Page 13. Second paragraph. Rewrite sentence regarding drop in vineyard water use, since there is no data to support a drop of 50% in the last 10 years. Suggested language: "Long term winegrape growers have stated that the amount of water applied to winegrapes has been significantly reduced over the last 10 years"

Page 13. Third paragraph from bottom. Reword first sentence to reflect that individual wineries have increased their water use efficiencies, but the number of wineries has increased. Note somewhere that wineries are relatively small users of water in the basin. Make water-use distinction between wineries and vineyards.

| Page 13. Third paragraph from bottom. Water use at their wineryies . . .

Page 14. Remove bullet regarding installation of rainwater harvesting systems. Define "MWC" and "Atascadero MWC" before using "AMWC".

Page 15. Item 4. Change to something like "changes in groundwater levels" instead of "rising and falling".

Page 18. Recommendation A.1. Reword as follows. "The objective of the Groundwater Management Plan is to achieve a long-term sustainable water supply for the basin. The Basin Management Objectives (BMOs) are based on achieving stakeholder-established water levels by sub-area that can collectively (if widely adopted and implemented) maintain overall basin demands below safe yield. All sub-area BMOs aim to stabilize water levels or maintain currently stable water levels. There is no direct tie to level-of-severity."

| Page 18. Recommendation A.3. The County . . . groundwater level declines.

Page 19. Recommendation A.4.a. Require [flow](#) measuring devices on new wells in the basin. Develop a protocol for deciding when a well permit application is required to provide [both at the flow](#) ~~and~~ [groundwater level](#) measuring device.

Page 19. Recommendation A.5. Include incentives. District to develop program.

Page 19. Recommendation A.6. Conduct another pumping update after . . . [and biennially thereafter](#).

Add Recommendation A.7. Update the numerical model within the next 5 years.

Add Recommendation A.8. Evaluate a funding mechanism for additional studies to spread the cost amongst the users of the basin (e.g. zone of benefit).

Add Recommendation A.8. The Board of Supervisors should conduct a strategic planning session on water law. The session would focus on the legal authorities of the County and the Flood Control and Water Conservation District.

Add Recommendation A.9. Urge County to prepare/distribute general educational material regarding the state of the basin and to consider disclosure documents on sale of parcels.

Page 19. Recommendation A.9. Do not approve . . . non-agricultural use of [groundwater](#).

Page 20. Recommendation C. 1. Require new development . . . to offset 100% of its water use [with non-agricultural water](#).

Add Recommendation C. 4. Revise boundaries of Estrella/Creston Area of Concern based on updated information.

Attachments. Include GEI Figure 2-3 from Technical Memorandum No. 1 of Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Management Plan – Difference in Spring Groundwater Elevation 1997 – 2009.