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Mark Zimmer
Golden State Water

September 25, 2012

Honorable Jim Patterson
Chairperson, Board of Supervisors
County of San Luis Obispo
1050 Monterey Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

Subject: Comments Collected from Water Resources Advisory Committee
Members on the Los Osos Wastewater Project Water Conservation
Implementation Plan

Dear Chairperson Patterson:

On September 5, 2012, the Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC) considered an earlier version of the Los Osos Wastewater Project Water Conservation Implementation Plan (Plan) that your Board is considering on September 25, 2012. While the implementation of approved conservation programs is not typically within the WRAC's purview, we felt the pending action by your Board and interest amongst the membership and the public warranted the provision of comments from the WRAC membership to your Board for consideration. The WRAC also appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback to County staff prior to finalizing the revised Plan you are considering.

The WRAC was provided a copy of the March 2012 Plan and a draft of the August 31, 2012 Los Osos Community Advisory Council (LOCAC) letter to your Board regarding the Plan. During its meeting, the WRAC received presentations from County Staff, the President of the Los Osos CSD, and the Chairperson of the LOCAC, and considered public comment. Members and Alternate Members then provided comments, which are summarized in an attachment to this letter. No vote was taken to adopt the entire list of comments, but each comment here had support by more than one speaker.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

MICHAEL WINN
Chairperson, Water Resources Advisory Committee

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 Bylaws dated 8/28/2012

Summary of Comments Collected from
Water Resources Advisory Committee Members
on the Los Osos Wastewater Project (Project)
Water Conservation Implementation Plan (Plan)

September 5, 2012

- Members expressed concern regarding the limited impact this Plan alone would have in addressing the overall issues in the Los Osos Groundwater Basin and questioned whether an effective Basin-wide management plan would be put in place in a timely fashion.
- Discussion included whether 50 gallons per capita indoor water use was an appropriate goal, questioned the origin and data of such a standard, whether a lower goal should be pursued for the \$5 Million budget if the original goal is reached under-budget, and the need to establish an accepted baseline.
- Options for reducing the cost of conducting pre-connection surveys, or eliminating them, should be considered, given the certification of the retrofits process and concern over invasion of privacy. It seemed to many that licensed plumbers could fill out a County survey form when they did their retrofit work, lowering survey costs as well as the number of County staff positions tasked for this process.
- Expediting the implementation of the Plan from 5 years to 3 years was supported.
- Options for increasing the total funding for rebates should be considered, and the dollar amount rebated should be the same in the third year as it was in the first.
- Members supported the concept of allowing those that have previously implemented the listed retrofit options to receive a rebate for implementing other water saving features (e.g. hot water recirculation system) if they are cost effective.
- The Plan should be reviewed to ensure dollar figures are consistent in tables, and for other editorial items. In particular, it should be clear that the programs are funded by Project participants rather than the County.
- The administrative cost of implementing the measures (generally 25-35%) appeared quite high to most Members – options for reducing this cost should be considered so that rebates can be extended at a larger dollar amount.

- Some Members commented on the amount budgeted for the water surveys and the public information/media program, both of which appeared to be quite high for a community that size.
- Members expressed concern regarding the ability of disadvantaged community members to pay up front for retrofits, which is compounded by the reduced rebates after year 1. There was a suggestion that the rebates be issued to the plumbers directly, so that residents would not have to pay the full amount and wait for refunds.
- More than a few speakers asked what would happen to the \$5M budgeted for water conservation if the conservation goals were reached with less money expended. (There was support for reducing the cost to ratepayers instead of expanding the conservation program.)
- A couple of speakers asked about retro-funding rebates to Los Osos residents who had installed water-saving devices before the rebates were begun, but this suggestion did not have much support from Members.
- Two speakers asked about extending rebates to people outside of the Prohibition Zone, since the savings would be to a shared aquifer, but this was not supported after staff explained that the funding was based on the sewer system (and the costs are being borne only by those served by the sewer system), not the water supply.
- There was discussion regarding the need to ban self-regenerating water softeners due to their high water use during the back flush cycle. Some members of the public stated that self-regenerating water softeners generally do not exist in Los Osos.