

County of San Luis Obispo Agricultural Liaison Advisory Board



**Agricultural Liaison
Advisory Board (ALAB)**

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Positions/Members/Terms

CHAIR: Dee Lacey
VICE CHAIR: Jean-Pierre Wolff

District One: Mecham Appt.
Dee Lacey (1/13)

District Two: Gibson Appt.
Lisen Bonnier (1/15)

District Three: Hill Appt.
Tom Ikeda (1/13)

District Four: Teixeira Appt.
vacant

District Five: Patterson Appt.
Noah Small (1/13)

Ag. Finance Rep.
Mark Pearce (8/14)

Cattlemen Rep.
Dick Nock

Coastal San Luis RCD Rep.
Jean-Pierre Wolff (8/14)

Direct Marketing/Organic Rep.
Eric Michielssen (4/12)

Environmental Rep.
Richard Hawley (1/15)

Farm Bureau Rep.
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Nursery Rep.
David Pruitt (4/12)

Upper Salinas-Las Tablas RCD Rep.
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Vegetable Rep.
Richard Quandt (4/12)

Wine Grape Rep.
Neil Roberts (4/12)

County Agricultural Commissioner
Brenda Ouwerkerk, Interim
Ex-Officio

U.C. Coop. Extension Farm Advisor
Mary Bianchi
Ex-Officio

DATE: January 12, 2011

TO: Adam Hill, Chair
County Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Resource Capacity
Study

As you know the Agricultural Liaison Advisory Board (ALAB) is comprised of not only appointees representing agriculture in each Supervisors' district, but also of members representing various agriculture organizations and commodities in the county. It is our intent as an advisory board to confirm and demonstrate that agriculture would always like to be part of the solution rather than exclusively part of the problem. Many of us in production agriculture are proud of the many improvements in farming and ranching techniques and continue to work on best management practices. For instance in vineyard management some of the better management practices in irrigation that have been implemented are: increased use of soil moisture sensors in vineyards; vineyard replanting and new planting with drought resistant rootstock; irrigation efficiency tests performed by mobile irrigation labs; and soil management to improve groundwater percolation.

It is with the intent of being part of the solution that we reviewed the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Resource Capacity Study at our January 3, 2011 ALAB meeting and present the following comments.

In the Resource Management System (RMS), protection of agricultural land through protection of water resources available for agriculture is one of the primary objectives. Although ALAB expressed no concerns regarding the perennial yield defined for the Paso Robles Basin, ALAB did express concerns over the assumptions regarding agricultural water use included in the water balance scenarios in the Resource Capacity Study. The appropriate information regarding agricultural water use remains a key question. The water balance scenarios that have been presented for consideration include a range of vineyard water use from 0.5 to 1.5 acre feet per year.

Because agriculture is the largest water user in the basin, the estimated value for vineyard water use may determine the declaration of a Level of Severity. Information from the **University of California Cooperative Extension's Paso Robles Irrigation Monitoring Project** will have the capability to focus the Capacity Study scenarios and allow the County to determine a Level of Severity (LOS) with a greater degree of assurance. ALAB questions whether the County should go forward with an LOS 3 III without the refinement of the vineyard water use information. Additionally, ALAB recommends that water balance scenarios refined by information from the Irrigation Monitoring Project must be part of the Capacity Study recommendations, be attached as an Appendix and must be part of all the annual RMS updates.

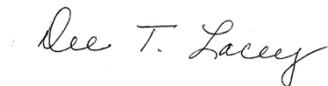
ALAB fully supports the Planning Commission's revision addressing Agricultural Processing (#4,c) uses as a part of agricultural uses and is not required to offset its water use. It is critical to protect water resources for agricultural processing such as processing facilities, wineries and coolers.

Other ALAB concerns:

1. There was concern expressed over a blanket prohibition of "new land divisions in the rural areas of the basin."
2. Any monitoring of wells needs to be voluntary and confidential as opposed to mandatory with information available to the public.
3. It is unfortunate that the economic impact is not being considered in the definition of the perennial yield of the Basin. ALAB recommends that the Board of Supervisors consider economic impacts.
4. The Resource Capacity Study is focused on groundwater pumping, yet agriculture provides the major surfaces for groundwater recharge as opposed to any other land use. Other land uses have significant areas of hardscape. There needs to be recognition of the important role that agriculture plays in providing recharge capacity to the basin, and consideration of policy recommendations that promote recharge opportunities throughout the basin.

We ask that you give serious consideration to these concerns and comments.

Sincerely,



DEE LACEY
Chair

cc: Supervisor Mecham
Supervisor Gibson
Supervisor Teixeira
Supervisor Patterson
James Caruso, Department of Planning and Building