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July 28, 2009

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

Subject: Agricultural Clusters

Dear Chairperson Gibson:

Beginning with the first agricultural cluster in 1984, the purpose of such clusters was to provide the agricultural landowner with needed financial support while retaining ninety-five (95%) of the land in agricultural production, thus avoiding what is often called "cookie cutter development".

Normally water allocation for agricultural use is not government's business, but with agricultural clusters the number of residences is supposed to be proportional to the sustainable ability to irrigate crops.

Members of the WRAC considered the formation of a subcommittee to review the water and wastewater impacts of agricultural clusters at their regularly scheduled meeting on April 1, 2009. A subcommittee to review the water and wastewater impacts of agricultural clusters was formed. Subcommittee members included Michael Winn (District 4), Sue Luft (Environmental at Large), and subcommittee chair Joy Fitzhugh (County Farm Bureau). The subcommittee met on May 27, 2009. At their regularly scheduled meeting on July 1, 2009, the WRAC reviewed the subcommittee report and their recommendations follow.

Members had split opinions on the language of one recommendation. Eight (8) voting members were in favor of recommending the following subcommittee language:

- Agricultural clusters should be limited to existing developable legal lots of record, with sufficient water supply on the project property.

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

However, seven (7) voting members preferred this language:

- Agricultural clusters should be limited by the availability of sufficient water supply on the project property.

It is the unanimous recommendation of the WRAC:

- That the sustainability of the agriculture's water supply must be determined prior to approval of an agricultural cluster.
- The agricultural cluster developer must retain responsibility for adequate residential water supply for a period of years found by independent hydrogeologists to be adequate for its long-term water sustainability.

Respectfully,

MICHAEL WINN
Chairperson, Water Resources Advisory Committee

cc: SLO County Board of Supervisors
SLO County Planning Commissioners
Bill Robeson, SLO County Department of Planning & Building