GOLETA WATER DISTRICT

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May 12, 2015

Honorable Debbie Arnold, Chair
San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors
County Government Center, Room D-430
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

Honorable Ken Topping, Chair
San Luis Obispo County Planning Commission
976 Los Osos Street, #200
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

MAY 20
SLO CO PLAN & BLDG DEPT

Re: Phillips 66 Rail Spur Extension Project

Dear Chairs and Members,

As President of the Goleta Water District (District) I am writing to express the serious concern of the District Board of Directors regarding the potential environmental impacts that the proposed Phillips 66 Rail Spur Extension Project could have on the Goleta Groundwater Basin. The District service area spans approximately 29,000 acres along the South Coast of Santa Barbara County between the ocean and the foothills west from Santa Barbara to El Capitan. The rail route through Santa Barbara County crosses a significant portion of the Goleta Groundwater Basin. The District provides safe and reliable water service to over 87,000 residents in the Goleta Valley and during this time of extraordinary drought is increasingly reliant on groundwater to provide adequate supplies for drinking, health and safety.

As you are aware, the project facilitates a large increase in the number of oil trains along the coastal corridor. The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) evaluates a range of potential impacts of the rail project, including the possibility of a major accident and spill. Spills along the mainline tracks were found to be significant and unavoidable (Class I) in the event that a spill occurred where it could affect water resources. The District recognizes that such an accident has the potential to cause catastrophic damage to our community's groundwater basin and watershed. The DEIR should cite and analyze the potential significant adverse impact that a derailment, spill, or explosion event would have on basins, creek systems and watersheds along the proposed transit route to protect the irreplaceable public resources.

The District has relied on the groundwater basin and its ability to provide for the health and well-being of the community for over 40 years. Likewise, District customers have invested millions of dollars to sustainably manage the basin. Currently the District has stored over 50,000 acre-feet of water in the basin to be used as a drought resource now and into the future. Financially, the District will spend over $13 million on new infrastructure over the next 5 years to expand extraction, injection and monitoring capacity.

Recognizing the serious nature of the matter, the District Board of Directors asks that the San Luis Obispo County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors take a hard look at the impacts of a potential spill on the groundwater basins of communities like the Goleta Valley that depend on local aquifers to provide water to residents, and whose water supply is put at grave and unacceptable risk by this project.

Sincerely,

Lauren Hanson
President
Goleta Water District