

ALAB MEETING MINUTES

Monday, April 7, 2014

Members and Alternates Present: Jean-Pierre Wolff, Don Warden, Mark Battany, Bill Struble, Eric Michielssen, Richard Hawley, Tom Ikeda, Neil Roberts, Joy Fitzhugh, Dan Rodrigues

Absent Members: Mark Pearce, David Pruitt, Melanie Blankenship, Jerry Diefenderfer, Lisen Bonnier, Claire Wineman, Chuck Pritchard, Dick Nock

Guests Present: Patricia Wilmore - Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance (Government Affairs Coordinator)

Staff Present: Marc Lea, Lynda Auchinachie – SLO County Dept. of Agriculture, James Caruso, Cheryl Cochran, Matt Ottoson – Planning and Building Department

1. **Call to Order:** 6:05 pm by Chair, Jean-Pierre Wolff. Quorum not present.
2. **Open Comment:** Patricia Wilmore shared that there will be a free vineyard Sustainability Assessment Workshop on April 16, 2014, at the Courtyard Marriott in Paso Robles. The workshop is presented by the California Sustainable Winegrowers Alliance.
3. **Announcements from ALAB Members & County Ag Department Staff Updates:**
 - Marc Lea indicated that a single Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) was found in the Falcon Ridge residential neighborhood of Arroyo Grande. Marc emphasized that at this point in time only one ACP had been detected. A quarantine area was established in a five mile radius of the find site. Approximately 10 to 12 growers are affected and will need to meet certain requirements in order to move their fruit outside of the quarantined area. Marc reminded ALAB members that the ACP alone is not a huge problem for citrus growers, rather the big concern is the Huanglongbing (HLB) disease that ACP vectors. At this point, HLB, or citrus greening disease, has not been found in our area, and has only been detected in one location in California within the Los Angeles area. Unlike some other pest insect quarantines, the host list for ACP is limited to citrus and so the regulations only affect citrus plants and fruit. California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is in charge of the project efforts, which includes establishing Compliance Agreements with the affected growers and retail nurseries, outreach to the general public, and insecticide treatments within 800 meters of the insect detection. A public meeting will be held on April 8, 2014, with insecticide treatments of residential citrus trees starting shortly thereafter.
 - Richard Hawley shared he submitted a suspicious looking bay laurel leaf to CDFA for a determination if the plant had sudden oak death.
4. **Previous Minutes:** Approval postponed due to lack of quorum

5. Update on the Renewable Energy Streamlining Project (James Caruso, Planning and Building Department)

- James Caruso provided an overview of the Renewable Energy Streamlining Project (RESP) process including a recap of grant requirements, stakeholder outreach, and how the effort is aimed at implementing existing Conservation and Open Space (COSE) policies by changing Title 22 to provide for streamlined projects. Streamlining would allow for a project within a Renewable Energy (RE) combining designation to have a ministerial approval versus a discretionary permit. James indicated the focus will be on the smaller sized projects, as utility scale projects are too big to be streamlined. Based on stakeholder comments, the areas that may be identified for streamlining include urban areas, appropriate rural areas with poor quality agricultural soils, and those areas with or close to adequate energy distribution systems. James anticipates multiple smaller projects occurring rather than a few larger projects. James shared that based on Jean-Pierre Wolff's recommendation, biodigesters will also be considered for streamlining. The Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will go out later this month with a scoping meeting on April 30, 2014. James will return to ALAB during late summer to provide an update on the RESP project. March 2015 is when the project needs to be completed in order to satisfy the grant requirements.
- Joy Fitzhugh asked for clarity regarding the RESP Opportunities and Constraints report statement that small-scale solar or wind projects would not change the rural character of an area. James Caruso indicated that that issue will be reviewed in the EIR.
- Richard Hawley inquired about obtaining a copy of the stakeholder outreach efforts. James Caruso indicated there will be a final stakeholder outreach report available on line shortly. Marc Lea will be emailing the link to ALAB members once available.

6. Update on the Resource Conservation District Ag Water Offset Program (James Caruso, Planning and Building Department)

- Cheryl Cochran provided a brief update on the residential offset program. Cheryl indicated that there is the potential to retrofit up to 2,700 homes that were built over the basin prior to 1994. The offset program is going to be front loaded with credits to ensure credits are available to developers upon request. The Wallace Group is managing the program and has selected the plumbing company that will be doing the retrofitting. Public outreach will include presentations to the service districts over the basin and contacting residents with informational postcards.
- Richard Hawley asked about how the monitoring will be done to ensure the program works as anticipated. James Caruso explained they will be using household averages.
- Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff suggested that retrofitting was the low hanging fruit. Jean-Pierre also shared that the state has grants available to replace grass with artificial grass. James Caruso explained that every new house will have landscaping restrictions.
- James Caruso indicated that the contract for the Ag Water Offset Program with the Upper Salinas-Las Tables Resource Conservation District (RCD) had been finalized. The RCD is currently in the data collection phase of the project and will soon enter an

extensive public outreach program to vet their proposed offset ideas. James indicated he is confident that the RCD will put together a successful program that could be implemented as soon as October 2014.

- Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff wondered how many acre feet of water may be offset with the program. James Caruso indicated it was too soon to know.
- Richard Hawley asked if the program would have a spatial connection with the identified sub basins in the watershed. James indicated that, in general, the sub basins were a way to breakdown the basin by regions for discussion purposes but the boundaries do not indicate a genuine physical difference. The RCD's proposal included evaluation of the spatial implications of new planting proposals relative to offsets to ensure proper management of the basin.
- Tom Ikeda asked how the ag offset program would be affected by the potential adjudication. James Caruso indicated he was not an attorney but in general adjudication doesn't change land use policies.
- James Caruso shared that they have been making case by case decisions when one existing irrigated crop will be replaced by a new irrigated crop. James stressed that historical rotational crops are exempt from the urgency ordinance.
- Tom Ikeda asked if an offset was required if someone had 1,000 acres of rangeland and wanted to convert 10 acres to an irrigated crop. James Caruso indicated that changing from rangeland to an irrigated crop would require an offset.
- Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff asked if the RCD's work will correlate with Mark Battany's work. Mark indicated his work was incorporated into the last model update and he is on the RCD team for the offset program.
- Neil Roberts asked if there would be any credits for water conservation at existing vineyard sites. James Caruso indicated that such an idea resembled water banking and he did not think that was the direction the RCD offset program was headed. That item can be addressed further when the US/LT-RCD presents their proposed offset program at a future ALAB meeting.

7. Presentation on Potential Countywide Water Conservation Implementation Strategies (Matt Ottoson and James Caruso, Planning and Building Department)

- Matt Ottoson summarized that at their March 4, 2014 meeting, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) provided staff direction to analyze countywide implementation of existing policies and programs with the goal of water conservation. Matt indicated the policies and programs/strategies they are investigating include the Growth Management Ordinance (GMO), requiring larger minimum parcel sizes in rural areas, requiring merger of substandard parcels, and transfer of development credits (TDC). The guidelines for implementation of these strategies include: 1) not all strategies will be appropriate in all areas; 2) it is important to use the Resource Management System (RMS) to focus on problem areas; 3) it is necessary to collaborate with water providers and other stakeholders; 4) it is important to focus on "bang for the buck" and 5) have the vision necessary to see future issues before they develop.

- James Caruso indicated the desire is to keep the tap on enough to continue to see communities thrive and grow.
- Richard Hawley pointed out that Cambria is not yet water efficient because they don't have a purple pipe system, landscaping is consuming 49 percent of potable water and there is no large scale roof water collection occurring.
- James Caruso shared that many communities have seen reduced household water demand with the implementation of water conservation strategies.
- Matt Ottoson displayed a map of the water resources in the county.
- Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff indicated that recycled water was not on the map and needs to be identified as a component of future water supplies. Jean-Pierre informed ALAB members that there is \$400 million available in low interest loans for the development of water recycling programs.
- Matt Ottoson indicated the strategies for water conservation are outlined in the COSE policies focusing on protection of agricultural water supplies. There is the understanding that residential uses are competing for groundwater with agriculture. The GMO could be used to reduce development in water constrained areas and encourage it in areas that have adequate water resources. Larger minimum parcel sizes in agriculture and rural areas could reduce nonagricultural water use. Existing COSE policy prohibits new land division in LOS II/III areas. Matt indicated that merger through the involuntary merger process could focus on antiquated subdivisions or planning area standards could be used to ensure resource availability.
- Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff asked how groundwater recharge was being addressed. James Caruso shared that landscaping requirements for new development include the incorporation of low impact development (LID) techniques for groundwater recharge.
- Matt Ottoson indicated that there continues to be controversy associated with the TDC program, however, they are going to explore the possibilities of transfer development potential from areas with constrained water resources to those that are not constrained.
- Matt Ottoson concluded his presentation by reminding ALAB members that policy consistency needs to be maintained and some of these strategies may require changes to existing Agriculture Element policies AGP 10, 11, 15, and 21.
- James Caruso asked that any comments on the potential countywide water conservation implementation strategies be provided to the Planning Department by the last week of April, 2014. The next BOS hearing on these strategies will be May 20, 2014. Matt's email address is mottoson@co.slo.ca.us and Cheryl's is ccoehran@co.slo.ca.us.

8. Future Agenda Items: Next meeting: May 5, 2014

To be determined.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Auchinachie, County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures