

ALAB MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 2, 2015

Members and Alternates Present: Lisen Bonnier, Tom Ikeda, Mark Pearce, Dick Nock, Jean-Pierre Wolff, Jerry Diefenderfer, Eric Michielssen, Don Warden, Claire Wineman, Joy Fitzhugh, Dan Rodrigues, Chuck Pritchard, Robert Hartzell

Absent Members: Melanie Blankenship, David Pruitt, Neil Roberts, Rick Hawley

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

Staff Present: Marc Lea, Lynda Auchinachie – SLO County Dept. of Agriculture, Royce Larsen – UC Cooperative Extension

1. **Call to Order:** 6:02 Wolff

2. **Open Comment:**

- Marc Lea reminded ALAB members that on March 24, 2015, there will be a free workshop for commercial agricultural business owners on how to control ground squirrels. The workshop will begin at 8:30 am at the American Legion Hall in Templeton.

3. **Announcements from ALAB Members & County Ag Department Staff Updates:**

- Lisen Bonnier updated ALAB members regarding the recent Planning Commission hearing in which the Renewable Energy Streamlining Program (RESP) was recommended for adoption. Lisen indicated the “fast track” program was recommended to be scaled down from a generous 160 acres to 40 acres and that qualifying renewable energy projects will be allowed on Williamson Act land up to 20 acres in size. Lisen also shared that there were concerns discussed regarding protecting rangeland for carbon sequestration, biological resources, and how grading prior to project submittal could affect any future agricultural uses.
- Claire Wineman announced that Santa Barbara County’s Farm Bureau would be hosting a spray safe day on March 3, 2015. The goal of the event is to educate farmworkers to be good stewards and neighbors and how to be proactive. Claire indicated she had recently participated in community outreach at Trilogy and that such an experience was a good opportunity to connect in a positive way with the community.
- Eric Michielssen reminded ALAB members that there will be a Farmers Guild meeting at the San Luis Obispo Grange Hall on March 19, 2015.

4. **Previous Minutes: MOTION: Wineman Approve January 5, 2015 minutes: Motion: 2nd: Rodrigues Approved:** Unanimous by all voting members in attendance with one abstention (Diefenderfer) due to absence in January. No “No” votes.

5. ALAB Governance & Membership Updates: Chair and Vice-Chair 2014-2016 terms; re-appointments and recently added alternates; status update on the timeline for the addition of a strawberry industry member to ALAB

- Marc Lea updated ALAB members on a variety of minor membership items: 1) Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff and Vice-Chair Eric Michielssen terms are from 2014 to January 2016, 2) Rick Hawley has been reappointed to ALAB through January 2019, and 3) the ALAB request to create a position for a strawberry representative is scheduled to go to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on March 24, 2015. Approximately two weeks after BOS approval, the Strawberry Commission can nominate a representative to be subsequently approved by the BOS through a letter to the Board and the standard consent agenda process.
- Mark Pearce indicated that Sarah Kramer will be his alternate and has over 15 years of lending experience.

6. Presentation: Update on the Proposed Statewide Grazing Regulatory Action Project (GRAP) , Royce Larsen – UC Cooperative Extension

- Royce Larsen indicated that there is not a lot known about the State Water Resources Control Board's (SWRCB) proposed Grazing Regulatory Action Project (GRAP), however, there is considerable concern about the process to date. Royce provided a brief history of the programs and educational outreach that has occurred since 1995. Royce shared that several resource groups developed water quality planning short courses that resulted in the voluntary development and implementation of plans to improve water quality on more than 2 million acres of rangeland statewide. Participation by Central Coast ranchers has been strong. Many of the short course participants received Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to implement practices to help distribute cattle across local ranches and avoid potential impacts upon streams and riparian areas. Many Central Coast ranchers have participated. However, in 2004 the laws changed and the whole voluntary part of regulating grazing was brought into question with some regions establishing prohibitions within impaired watersheds. Stakeholders are opposed to new regulations, particularly the one-size-fits all approach and/or a per acre fee that would devastate the ranching business. Royce also shared that a Rangeland Science Symposium featuring Patty Kouyoumdjian, Executive Sponsor for the GRAP, would be held March 3, 2015.
- Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff provided his insights as the Chair of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. Jean-Pierre shared that the GRAP was originally spearheaded by Region 6 where they felt there were issues associated with grazing. When the region suggested establishing a policy to address concerns, the state board suggested a broader set of guidelines to apply statewide. Jean-Pierre expressed that the concerns from the members of the ranching community have been heard and are being taken seriously. He recognizes that the process may have disenfranchised many and that was not the goal.

- Jerry Diefenderfer asked for an explanation on the details of what exactly is being proposed.
- Joy Fitzhugh indicated that not understanding the proposal was part of the problem and she provided a hand out of questions raised by the San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau. Joy shared she had drafted a letter to send to the BOS.
- Claire Wineman suggested California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association (CACASA) send a letter raising concerns about the process/proposal.
- ALAB members discussed concerns about the process and potential future regulations as well as how best to express their viewpoint in the form of a letter to the BOS. Joy Fitzhugh, Claire Wineman, Dick Nock, and Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff volunteered to draft a letter. (see attached letter)
- Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff suggested the Vice Chair should sign the letter to avoid any appearance of conflict of interest.

MOTION: Warden Draft a letter to the Board of Supervisors expressing ALAB's concerns with the Grazing Regulatory Action Project (GRAP). **Motion: 2nd: Nock** **Approved: Unanimous** by all voting members in attendance. No "No" votes or abstentions.

7. Updates and Discussions: Agricultural Water Waste Prevention – Development of Best Management Practices; status update on the Agricultural Water Offset Program; status update on the creation of a new water district over the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin; status update on the proposed regulation of groundwater exportation – Chair Wolff

- Marc Lea shared that the BOS directed planning staff to modify existing Agriculture Element policy to expand implementation of irrigation best management practices and educational outreach rather than pursue an agricultural water waste prevention ordinance. ALAB members discussed utilizing UC Cooperative Extension's expertise in these areas.
- Lynda Auchinachie informed ALAB members that the BOS directed planning staff to prepare an agricultural offset ordinance that would: 1) apply only to the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin, 2) be water neutral with a 1:1 offset, 3) not include new vested rights, and 4) include a sunset clause to expire the ordinance at the time a groundwater sustainability plan is established
- Jean-Pierre Wolff provided an overview of Public Works plans to form a water resource division to manage the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Jean-Pierre noted that SGMA is new territory and things are currently fluid with a lot of learning ahead.
- Marc Lea reminded ALAB members about the groundwater export ordinance that was presented during October 2014 meeting. Marc indicated that the issue will return to the BOS for discussion purposes in March or April, 2015.

8. Future Agenda Items: Next meeting – April 6, 2015

To be determined

Meeting Adjourned: 7:35 p.m.

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

County of San Luis Obispo Agricultural Liaison Advisory Board

2156 Sierra Way, Suite A
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401



Agricultural Liaison
Advisory Board (ALAB)

Positions/Members/Terms

CHAIR: Jean-Pierre Wolff
VICE CHAIR: Eric Michielssen

District One: Mecham Appt.
Melanie Blankenship (1/17)

District Two: Gibson Appt.
Lisen Bonnier (1/19)

District Three: Hill Appt.
Tom Ikeda (1/17)

District Four: Compton Appt.
open

District Five: Arnold Appt.
Jerry Diefenderfer (1/17)

Ag. Finance Rep.
Mark Pearce (8/18)

Cattlemen Rep.
Dick Nock

Coastal San Luis RCD Rep.
Jean-Pierre Wolff (8/18)

Direct Marketing/Organic Rep.
Eric Michielssen (4/16)

Environmental Rep.
Richard Hawley (1/19)

Farm Bureau Rep.
R. Don Warden

Nursery Rep.
David Pruitt (4/16)

Upper Salinas-Las Tablas RCD Rep.
Charles Pritchard (1/18)

Vegetable Rep.
Claire Wineman (4/16)

Wine Grape Rep.
Neil Roberts (4/16)

County Agricultural Commissioner
Marty Settevendemie
Ex-Officio

U.C. Coop. Extension, County Director
Mary Bianchi

DATE: March 16, 2015

TO: San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: State Water Board Grazing Regulatory Action Project (GRAP)

Dear Supervisors:

Grazing in San Luis Obispo County and throughout California is an essential element of the county and state's economies and rural communities and provides important ecosystem services such as filtering and infiltrating surface water, providing open landscapes, protecting habitat for native plants and wildlife and reducing fire hazards. San Luis Obispo County has over 2,000,000 acres of grazing land. At its meeting on March 2, 2015 ALAB unanimously approved a motion to draft a letter to the Board of Supervisors expressing concerns with GRAP.

More specifically we ask that you engage with local and statewide partners as appropriate to minimize the negative potential impacts of the proposed program. This may take the form of providing direction to work with local UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE), engaging with the California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association (CACASA) and others. In addition, we suggest leveraging the Central Coast Cattlemen's and RWQCB previous joint efforts and report titled "2008 Central Coast Cattlemen's Grazing Land Non-point Source Approach".

Many local ranchers have already taken steps to improve managing water quality impacts on rangeland. Over 400 landowners in the Central Coast, representing over 1,000,000 acres, have completed a range water quality short course developed and presented by the University of California Cooperative Extension. Rangeland management plans have been written by many of our area ranchers addressing best management practices.

Stakeholders have expressed concerns with the lack of transparency of the process, response to stakeholder concerns and water quality data.

We ask that the Board of Supervisors join our local farmers and ranchers and send a letter of concern to the State Water Resources Control Board regarding the GRAP.

Sincerely,

Jean-Pierre Wolff, Ph.D.
ALAB Chair