

## **ALAB MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday, May 2, 2016**

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

**Staff Present:** Marc Lea, Lynda Auchinachie – San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture

**Absent Members:** Greg France, Neil Roberts, Mark Pearce, Melanie Blankenship, Sarah Kramer, Kaylee Ellis, Dick Nock, David Pruitt, Sandra Fischbein

**Guests Present:** Patricia Wilmore – Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance

**1. Call to Order:** 6:00 Chair Wolff

**2. Open Comment:**

- Joy Fitzhugh shared rainfall records and reservoir storage information from the current Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC) agenda. Joy highlighted that the information provided a comparison between 2015 and 2016. Joy provided copies to members that were interested.
- Chuck Pritchard reminded ALAB members that there will be a rangeland management workshop sponsored by the RCD at the Bonnheim Ranch on May 26, 2016. The fee for the workshop ranges from \$65 to \$85.
- Patricia Wilmore indicated that Public Works water resources division will present information on Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) compliance to the BOS on May 24, 2016.

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

- Marc Lea provided a brief update on ALAB membership: 1) Claire Wineman and David Pruitt were confirmed for another 4 year term, 2) Dan Rodrigues, as the wine grape representative, and Nicky Anderson, as the direct marketing representative, will be confirmed by the next ALAB meeting, and 3) Joe Plummer will be the alternate for wine grapes and Peter Jankay will be the direct marketing alternate.
- Eric Michielssen expressed his appreciation working with ALAB for the past eight years.
- Marc Lea indicated there were a few more recent detections of the Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP) in the city of San Luis Obispo, as well as in the Grover Beach and Oceano areas; those detections expanded the quarantine to include one grower with over 100 acres of citrus. About 95% of county citrus acreage is now under quarantine. Marc shared that a regional approach will be implemented statewide to more effectively manage ACP movement. This new approach is under development and will affect all of our SLO County citrus growers.

- Marc Lea updated ALAB members on the fact that fresh strawberries will soon be allowed to be air freighted to China with the proper inspections.
- ALAB members discussed the complexities of medicinal marijuana and that the issue would be returning to the BOS in mid-July.
- Jerry Diefenderfer indicated growers continue to produce marijuana crops in CA Valley, and in some cases, appear to be using water from the CSD tank to support such crops.
- Lisen Bonnier raised a concern about competition for greenhouse space with other crops such as vegetable starts. ALAB members discussed the likelihood that marijuana production limitations would address that concern.

**4. Previous Minutes: MOTION: Pritchard Approve March 3, 2016: Motion 2<sup>nd</sup>: Bonnier Approved:** Unanimous by all voting members. No “No” votes.

**5. Senate Bill 88 update and discussion –Development of Water Measurement and Reporting Regulation**

- Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff indicated that passage of SB88 was prompted by multiple years of drought. Jean-Pierre provided an overview of SB88 components such as providing: 1) assistance to disadvantaged communities to access safe drinking water; 2) a mechanism and authority to fine for water conservation noncompliance; and 3) a mechanism for regional management grants for emergency purposes. SB88 also includes requirements for registering, measuring, and reporting the use of surface water resources. The water impoundment requirements do not apply to ponds filled with groundwater such as an irrigation pond only ponds capturing surface water.
- Tom Ikeda shared that there was a bit of confusion over pumping close to a stream that could be considered direct surface water diversion. Jean-Pierre Wolff indicated that it could be complicated because wells near a stream are shallow and could impact stream flow. Jean-Pierre stressed the importance of registering riparian wells to ensure senior rights. Jean-Pierre indicated that not all wells in close proximity to a creek are in violation.
- Joy Fitzhugh informed ALAB members that the rule of thumb shared at a recent meeting was that a well within 25 feet of a creek would have a strong likelihood of tapping into riparian surface waters whereas a well 100 feet from a creek would be less likely to be tapping into riparian waters. However, in the Sacramento River area for example, one could be tapping into river flow up to a mile away. Joy also shared that drones are being used to identify ponds that are not registered. Joy provided ALAB members with an SB88 fact sheet prepared by the State Water Resources Control Board.
- Jean-Pierre Wolff indicated that a registered well provides protection and the registration can easily be done online.
- ALAB members discussed the estimated 10 -15 percent accuracy of some water meters. Jean-Pierre Wolff informed ALAB members that new meter technology is reducing prices.
- Claire Wineman asked about the outreach process. Jean-Pierre Wolff indicated that

everyone who has a registered well or pond has been notified about the new metering and reporting requirements.

**6. Assessing the role of ALAB and the agricultural industry's involvement in addressing current and ongoing groundwater issues throughout San Luis Obispo County - update and discussion**

- Jean-Pierre Wolff reminded ALAB members that since last year there have been ongoing communications with Courtney Howard who manages the new water resources division, within Public Works, to ensure ALAB members remain aware of water policy issues. Jean-Pierre also indicated there are three members representing agriculture on WRAC. Jean-Pierre asked how to facilitate a closer engagement with WRAC for key topics such as SGMA.
- Joy Fitzhugh and Chuck Pritchard suggested recommending adding an ALAB member to WRAC.
- Marc Lea updated ALAB members on recent water related issues based on information provided by Courtney Howard. Marc indicated that there will be a BOS hearing on May 24<sup>th</sup> updating board members on the Cuyama, San Luis, Santa Maria, and Los Osos basins. The Paso Robles basin is not the focus of the May 24<sup>th</sup> hearing. Marc indicated issues such as boundary changes and how to manage areas that fall outside of adjudicated boundaries will be discussed. An important question for agriculture in the long-term SGMA management plans will be how wells will be measured and how that information will be reported for these basins.
- Jean-Pierre Wolff emphasized that July 2017 is the deadline to establish a groundwater sustainability agency (GSA) for medium, high, and critical priority basins. Jean-Pierre recommended the county should have an overall SGMA master plan for all basins and customize as needed.
- Richard Hawley asked how many basins are in the county. ALAB members were not certain.
- Robert Hartzell expressed his desire that ALAB play a stronger role in advising the BOS on water policy issues rather than direct involvement in WRAC.
- Jean-Pierre Wolff indicated that agriculture is one of the largest water users and therefore has one of the largest impacts on groundwater basins. Jean-Pierre shared that the impact does not have to be negative and that agriculture needs to be an integral part of the SGMA process to be successful. Jean-Pierre requested feedback on how to get ALAB more engaged.
- Chuck Pritchard restated his desire to have an ALAB member join WRAC. Jerry Diefenderfer disagreed and suggested WRAC is too big and struggling. Jerry shared that ALAB should be focused on providing its expertise to the BOS and Public Works early in the process. Jean-Pierre Wolff agreed with Jerry and indicated that consultants are hired but they do not ask ALAB for input early enough in the process.
- ALAB members discussed that water policy is driven by money, politics, and power.

- Patricia Wilmore suggested that Jean-Pierre Wolff attend the BOS hearing on May 24, 2016, to let the board know that ALAB wants to be more involved, as the protection of agriculture is very important.
- ALAB members discussed writing a letter to the BOS articulating their interest in providing expertise.
- Claire Wineman suggests that a member of the agricultural community be appointed to any GSA boards that are developed. Don Warden agrees with Claire and would like to see the seed planted as soon as possible.

**Motion: Wineman:** Write a letter to the BOS reminding them that ALAB is an important resource to provide expertise on water policy and authorize a representative to present the letter at the May 24, 2016, BOS hearing. The letter should specifically request ALAB be part of the GSA formation process that creates a pathway for formal representation for agriculture on the GSA board and direct public works to include consultation with ALAB for projects that involve agricultural water use. **Motion 2<sup>nd</sup> : Ikeda.**

**Approved:** Unanimous.

- Patricia Wilmore recommended the letter should be sent first to BOS and Public Works staff and read into the record at the May 24, 2016, hearing. ALAB members designated Lynda Auchinachie to read the letter at the hearing.

**7. Future Agenda Items:**

Water policy

H2-A farmworker issues

**Next meeting – June 6, 2016 -**

Meeting Adjourned: 8:05 p.m.

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