

ALAB MEETING MINUTES

Monday, February 5, 2018

Members and Alternates Present: Jean-Pierre Wolff, Don Warden, Sarah Kramer, Dan Rodrigues, Tom Ikeda, Chuck Pritchard, Mark Battany, Lisen Bonnier, Kaylee Ellis

Staff Present: Marc Lea, Lynda Auchinachie – San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture, Dick Tzou – San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works

Absent Members: Mark Pearce, Jutta Thoerner, Greg France, Craig Pritchard, David Pruitt, Dick Nock, Claire Wineman

Guests Present: Patricia Wilmore, James Green, Jaime Bowker

1. Call to Order: 5:05 pm Chair Wolff

- **Open Comment:** Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff discussed the significant wildfires that occurred throughout the state during 2017. Jean-Pierre reminded us that forestry is an agricultural activity. The extreme fire season of 2017 reminds us that good forestry management has an important role in reducing wildfires and the consequences of winter erosion causing mud flows. Our County has thousands of acres of forest land.

2. Previous Minutes – both October and November 2017

MOTION: Pritchard Approve October 2017 minutes.

MOTION 2nd: Ikeda

Approved: Unanimous by all voting members. No “no” votes or abstentions.

MOTION: Warden Approve November 2017 minutes.

MOTION 2nd: Ikeda

Approved: Unanimous by all voting members. No “no” votes. Wolff abstained due to absence of the November meeting.

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

- James Green shared that the Farm Bureau has been busy developing its new website that should be up and running soon. James also indicated they were tracking the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General Waste Discharge Requirements process by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board; working with the San Luis County Planning Department on potential revisions to the farmworker housing ordinance; and attended the listening session with Congressmen Carbajal and Peterson about the upcoming Farm Bill.
- Patricia Wilmore indicated Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance was also tracking the issues outlined by James above. Patricia stated that in terms of farmworker housing there was the potential to remove current restrictions, such as the 5-mile restriction, that could result in the development of more farmworker housing.

- Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff stated there needs to be scalability for farmworker housing. Large conglomerate operations could purchase former hotels or other such facilities but the smaller growers need realistic options too.
- Mark Battany informed ALAB members that a summary of his irrigation study would be coming out in the next issue of California Agriculture. The irrigation study results have been used by several sources for decision making purposes. Mark also envisions the newly formed water district and groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) will find the information useful for the development of their groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs). Mark also highlighted some of the changes occurring in his office with retirements and fewer positions being filled.
- Kaylee Ellis stated the Growers and Shipper Association of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo County was also closely tracking and commenting on the Eastern San Joaquin Ag Order, the Farm Bill, and farmworker housing.
- Patricia Wilmore reminded ALAB members that the Estrella-El Pomar Water District still needs to be accepted as a GSA by the county and letters of support were encouraged.
- ALAB members discussed that there was a proposed water export initiative that is currently in the signature gathering phase.
- Sarah Kramer indicated interest rates are up.
- Dan Rodrigues shared that pruning was under way and that many growers were converting back to head trained cane pruning, largely due to a lack of available labor during the spring and summer months. Dan also indicated that there are more and more organic and biodynamic operations.
- Lisen Bonnier indicated that the drought has forced a change in management practices.
- Chuck Pritchard shared that the RCD has received funding for a Watershed Coordinator to develop a watershed management plan for the Salinas watershed.
- Tom Ikeda observed that rain totals in the south county are worse than the worst year of the recent drought. Tom indicated there has been less than 2.5 inches of rain and growers are looking at a change in crop rotation.

4. ALAB Governance – Chair Wolff

- Tom Ikeda indicated the governance subcommittee recommended Jean-Pierre Wolff to continue as Chair and Dan Rodrigues be Vice-Chair.

MOTION: Warden Elect Jean-Pierre Wolff Chair and Dan Rodrigues Vice-Chair.

MOTION 2nd: Bonnier

Approved: Unanimous by all voting members. No “no” votes or abstentions.

- Jean-Pierre will work with Dan to provide the necessary hands on experience to eventually transition to Chair.
- Marc Lea provided an update of ALAB membership expirations and vacancies: Mark Pearce (Ag Finance) and Jean-Pierre Wolff (Coastal RCD) and Chuck Pritchard (Upper Salinas-Las Tables RCD) positions expire in 2018; and the 5th District, Environmental representative, and the Strawberry representative positions remain unfilled.

5. Announcements from County Agriculture Department – Marc Lea

- Marc Lea provided a handout that explained new requirements for use/application and notification of both restricted and non-restricted pesticides within a quarter mile of a school or day care center. In many cases application is limited to Monday thru Friday from 6 am to 6 pm. Marc is the contact person if there are questions.
- Marc Lea also provided a handout on the pesticides that are legally allowed to be used on cannabis. Marc indicated the local SLO County cannabis ordinance is now in effect and that only the 141 registered growers are allowed to apply for a land use permit during 2018.
- Marc Lea shared that the Asian Citrus Psyllid regulations have changed to a regionalized process; these changes have led to additional quarantine requirements for some local citrus growers.

6. Discussion: Other Ag Related

- Dick Tzou provided an update of GSA information for the entire county. The following website includes the information as well as agendas for future GSA meetings.
<https://slocountywater.org/site/Water%20Resources/SGMA/>
Dick also indicated the county will be working with Stanford University and a Danish organization to use the latest technology to determine the geology for a portion of the Paso Robles Basin.
- Jean-Pierre Wolff shared that he too was involved with a collaborative project involving Cal Poly geophysics students to conduct ground sensor data gathering that results in two-dimensional hydrogeology up to 500 feet deep and .5 miles in distance.
- Chuck Pritchard shared his concerns with the continued planting of vineyards that has been allowed on former marginal grazing land over the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin, and the potential long-term impacts to water availability that those practices could have on the local groundwater supply.
- Marc Lea indicated the Board of Supervisors have reduced their meetings to two a month and therefore the agendas are filling up fast. In regard to agricultural issues of interest, Marc indicated there will be a meeting in March to discuss modifying Paso Robles Groundwater Basin boundaries and a meeting in May to discuss adding cannabis activities as a compatible use for Williamson Act land.

7. Future Agenda Items:

- Drought conditions

Next meeting – March 5, 2018

Meeting Adjourned 7:15 pm

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Auchinachie, San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture