

DRAFT ALAB MEETING MINUTES

Monday, December 3, 2018

Members and Alternates Present: Lisen Bonnier, Mark Pearce, David Pruitt, Dan Rodrigues, Jean Pierre-Wolff, Jutta Thoerner, Mark Battany, Krista Burke, Kaylee Ellis

Staff Present: Marc Lea and Lynda Auchinachie – San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture, Kylie Hensley and Kip Morais – San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning & Building, Dick Tzou – San Luis County Public Works

Absent Members: Craig Pritchard, Tom Ikeda, Greg France, Dick Nock, Chuck Pritchard, Claire Wineman, Don Warden

Guests Present: Chris Rose – Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, Patricia Wilmore – Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance

1. Call to Order: 5:06 pm Chair Wolff

2. Open Comment:

- ALAB members welcomed new Environmental Representative Krista Burke.
- Dick Tzou indicated draft decisions for boundary modifications had been made by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) for Los Osos Valley, Santa Maria, and Paso Robles basins. The 2018 Bulletin Basin Boundary Modifications - Draft Decisions summary is available at https://water.ca.gov/-/media/DWR-Website/Web-Pages/Programs/Groundwater-Management/Basin-Boundary-Modifications/Files/2018_Draft_Decision_Summary_Table_v1.pdf?la=en&hash=328A4EEA70D59455AB718D6CCA28B4C65DD5DE8B
- Lisen Bonnier shared that the Kompogas Recycling Plant had its grand opening. The green waste digester produces compost and liquid fertilizer that is available to farmers in the area. Interested parties can contact Noah Small with Pacific Organics.
- Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff suggested that ALAB members consider forming a subcommittee to provide written expertise on potential irrigated agricultural water conservation measures for the WRAC subcommittee. Dan Rodrigues, Lisen Bonnier, Jutta Thoerner, and Mark Battany volunteered for the subcommittee.

3. Previous Minutes – August 2018 and October 2018

Motion: Rodrigues Approve August and October 2018 minutes.

Motion 2nd: Bonnier

Approved: Unanimous by all voting members. Wolff and Ellis abstain for October. Burke abstained for both August and October.

4. ALAB Governance: Marc Lea gave a series of updates on recent and upcoming membership items and ALAB 2019 meeting schedule.

- Lisen Bonnier will be meeting with Supervisor Gibson to determine if she will serve another term as District 2 Representative.

- Jackie Crabb will be the alternate for the Coastal San Luis RCD.
- Krista Burke will complete the existing term as the Environmental Representative and be nominated to serve the subsequent four-year term starting February 2019.
- Upper Salinas-Las Tablas RCD will appoint Mary Bianchi and/or George Kendall as the representative and alternate.
- ALAB's 2019 meeting schedule is the first Monday of the month except for September in which the meeting date will be September 9, 2019.
- Jutta Thoerner recommended exploring the option for members to attend meeting via conference call.

5. Update/Discussion: Presentation: Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program – Update on Ag Order 4.0
Chris Rose, Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Presentation Link:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/ag_waivers/docs/26nov2018_stakeholder_mtgs_fin.pdf

- Chris Rose, Irrigated Lands Section Manager for Ag Order 4.0, provided a status update and outlined requirement options for Ag Order 4.0. Chris has done extensive outreach to stakeholder groups and detailed information is available online via the attached link. https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/ag_waivers/docs/26nov2018_stakeholder_mtgs_fin.pdf
- Chris reminded ALAB members that the current Ag Order 3.0 will expire on March 8, 2020. Public comment for the Requirement Options is January 18, 2019.
- Jean-Pierre Wolff explained the implications of various legal challenges in terms of time frames and indicated that the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board is interested to hear about what incentives farmers believe are appropriate for certain levels of farming activity to reduce impact on water quality. Jean-Pierre encouraged interested parties to comment.

6. Update/Discussion: Funding Opportunities for Agricultural Water Conservation Practices
Kylie Hensley and Kip Morais, San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning & Building

- Kip Morais and Kylie Hensley explained that funds from water offset development fees, over the Paso Robles groundwater basin, may become available for agricultural water conservation measures over that basin. Kip and Kylie were seeking input from ALAB members on if there was an interest in such funds and ideas of how the funding could be used. Specifically, they were interested in ideas regarding the structure of potential funding opportunities (pooled, individual, or dedicated to specific practices etc). It was noted that vineyards represent 92 percent of irrigated acreage over the Basin.
- Jutta Thoerner suggested helping dry farm walnut growers so they could continue dry farm practices rather than stop farming walnuts and selling for irrigated vineyards.
- Dan Rodrigues suggested funds go to support Mark Battany's ongoing research relative to vineyard water use and rebates for using irrigation monitoring systems.
- Mark Battany indicated that current vineyard operations are pretty darn efficient in terms of water use. However, there are things that could be considered such as

replacing sprinkler frost protection. Mark indicated that concerns about potential future water allocations may reduce interest in using less water.

- Jean-Pierre Wolff suggested funds could be used for approaches identified in the Healthy Soils Initiative, assistance for operation and maintenance of the RCD mobile lab testing and water augmentation projects.
- ALAB members indicated CalCan was another group that may have worthwhile ideas.

7. Announcements from County Agriculture Department staff – Marc Lea

- There are currently two legal pathways for hemp cultivation in the State of California – the Ag Research exemption and commercial hemp production. The Ag Research exemption is already being utilized, but the commercial pathway has not been practically available due to registration requirements that still need to be developed by the State and have not yet been completed and released. Recently, the State has made some progress on developing the regulations needed to begin registering commercial hemp cultivators. Regulations have been proposed to establish the required registration fees; that regulation is in the comment period until December 24, 2018.
https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/regs_hemp.html#IH-1
- Registration for commercial hemp cultivation through the County Ag Department is expected to become available sometime during the first half of 2019. Much of the interest in hemp production in San Luis Obispo County appears to be from growers of CBD hemp, rather than hemp for fiber or industrial uses. Locally, hemp production is listed in the “Crop Production and Grazing” land use category, along with all other ag crops besides cannabis. Once registered, commercial hemp cultivators will be able to cultivate without specific acreage limitations or buffer requirements. Odor issues from CBD hemp could be nearly as problematic as cannabis, and there could be a number of odor complaints due to commercial hemp beginning later in 2019.
- San Luis Obispo remains in a regional Asian Citrus Psyllid quarantine with Monterey and San Benito counties. Quarantine rules were recently adjusted to disallow hand cleaning as an option prior to leaving a quarantine region. The only official options currently are having the fruit machine cleaned, insecticide treatments within a narrow time frame prior to harvest, or post-harvest insecticide applications. A waiver for using the hand cleaning option may be available on a case by case basis, but the grower would need to contact the County Ag Department so they could assist in requesting that waiver from the state quarantine officials.
- After several stakeholder meetings, a Public Review Draft of the Agricultural Worker Housing Ordinance is currently underway and should be available to the public at the end of December or early January. Public hearings are anticipated to be held during spring 2019.
<http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Departments/Planning-Building/Active-Major-Projects/Agricultural-Worker-Housing-Ordinance.aspx>

- Recent discussions at ALAB regarding the development of a county cannabis ordinance may not have affected or been of major interest to many of our existing growers; however, all local farmers should be aware of potential issues associated with the pesticide testing/screening process that is required for all cannabis crops. While pesticide drift is illegal, it is always a possibility if applicators do not utilize adequate precautions and proper application techniques. All legally grown cannabis is currently being sampled and tested for both molds and pesticides. The detection levels for pesticides in this cannabis testing process are extremely low, and conventional and organic growers that neighbor cannabis cultivation sites should be extremely cognizant of the potential for cross contamination through drift. Since the value of a cannabis is considerably higher than food or other crops and every lot is being tested, the liability concerns of damaging such a crop are considerable. Citrus and avocado growers in Santa Barbara County near Carpinteria that border large-scale cannabis cultivation sites are currently dealing with this new challenge and have started a working group to proactively deal with potential problems before they occur.

8. Future Agenda Items: Draft Agricultural Worker Housing Ordinance and wildfire prevention on agricultural land.

Next meeting – January 7, 2019

Meeting Adjourned 7.00 pm

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