

ALAB MEETING MINUTES

Monday – January 5, 2026

SLO County Farm Bureau Office – 4815 Morabito Place, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Members and Alternates Present: Dan Rodrigues, Sarah Kramer (MS Teams), Elliot Talley, Paul Clark, Dylan Theobald, Jerry Diefenderfer, Ron Harben, Tom Ikeda, Lisen Bonnier, Hallie Richards (MS Teams), Matt Merrill (MS Teams)

Staff Present: David Aguayo and Ian Landreth – SLO County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures, Christopher Greer – University Cooperative Extension, Blaine Reely – SLO County Department of Groundwater Sustainability

Absent Members: Craig Pritchard, Jeff McKee

Guests Present: Eric Michielssen - USLTRCD, Patricia Wilmore – Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance (MS Teams), Hillary Phillips – United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service, Russell Todd – USDA Farm Service Agency

I. Call to Order, introductions, quorum determination

The meeting was called to order by Chair Rodrigues at 5:02 p.m. There were enough members present to have a quorum.

II. Open Comment

Members wishing to address the ALAB on matters other than the scheduled items may do so at this time, when recognized by the Chairman.

Dan Rodrigues opened public comment.

Dan Rodrigues closed public comment.

III. Previous Minutes – November 2025

Thereafter on Motion to approve November 2025 minutes as presented by: Jerry Diefenderfer, Second by: Liesen Bonnier, and on the following vote:

REPRESENTATIVE:	AYES:	NOES:	ABSTAIN:	RECUSE:
Dan Rodrigues	X			
Jerry Diefenderfer	X			
Paul Clark	X			
Lisen Bonnier	X			
Elliot Talley	X			
Dylan Theobald	X			
Ron Harben	X			
Tom Ikeda			X	

The ALAB approved the November 2025, minutes, as amended.

IV. ALAB Governance and Membership Updates

- David Aguayo informed the ALAB that the request to approve the appointment of Eric Michielssen, filling the vacant Upper Salinas-Las Tablas position to the Agricultural Liaison Advisory Board was on the consent agenda for the Board of Supervisors January 6, 2026, meeting. Aguayo also advised that Daniel Jones was stepping down as the Nursery Representative to be replaced by Jared Smith and that the nomination letter from Jones or the Central Coast Greenhouse Growers Association is pending. The Ag Department will bring the request to the Board of Supervisors for acceptance in the next month or so for acceptance once the appropriate paperwork has been received.
- David Aguayo mentioned that the ALAB chair and vice chair position terms are set to expire in May 2026. Aguayo reminded the ALAB that there was no limit to the number of terms one can serve on either of those positions.
- Jerry Diefenderfer asked how Chair and Vice Chair elections had been handled in the past. Ian Landreth recalled that when the Vice Chair position was previously vacant, an ad hoc committee was formed to nominate a candidate. He noted his understanding that an ad hoc committee was not necessary if both officers wished to continue serving. Diefenderfer suggested that a nominating committee could still be useful to confirm incumbents' interest and seek recommendations if needed. Landreth added that in past Chair and Vice Chair election cycle the ad hoc committee was not formed until February. Dan Rodrigues asked whether there was interest in forming one at this time. Tom Ikeda expressed concern that a committee might limit opportunities for others to self-nominate and suggested open nominations from the floor. Rodrigues proposed first confirming Sarah Kramer's interest. Kramer stated she was willing to remain Vice Chair but was not prepared to serve as Chair at this time due to other commitments. Landreth referenced guidance from the previous Assistant Ag Commissioner Marc Lea indicating that an ad hoc committee would only be needed if either officer declined to continue. Rodrigues confirmed he would remain Chair, and Kramer agreed to continue as Vice Chair. Diefenderfer suggested holding formal elections at the next ALAB meeting with open nominations. The group generally agreed.

V. Discussion Items:

a. Biosolids Development of Action Item from Subcommittee – Subcommittee Members

- Dan Rodrigues introduced the item and provided a recap to the ALAB that Paul Clark, Claire Wineman, and himself were going to be writing a letter to the Board of Supervisors regarding ALAB's position on the upcoming expiration and possible extension of the biosolids application moratorium for San Luis Obispo County.
- Paul Clark summarized that, based on prior discussions and comments from previous meetings, ALAB would rely on the same comment letter previously submitted to the Board of Supervisors on this issue. The letter would be updated to include project specific details, such as PFAS, and its relationship to the Irrigated Lands Program and the State Water Resources Control Board. The revised draft would be circulated to the committee by email for review, comment, and approval.
- Dan Rodrigues asked if there was a copy of the old letter available.

- David Aguayo confirmed he had a copy of the old letter and would redistribute it to ALAB committee members.
 - Jerry Diefenderfer expressed concern about ALAB developing a position statement before understanding County staff's official position. He noted that while he did not expect a definitive solution at this stage, he felt it was awkward to simply reaffirm ALAB's prior position without knowing whether staff's perspective had changed. He recalled that staff had previously indicated they were uncertain about their direction and suggested that ALAB consider waiting to take a formal position until County staff's approach was clearer.
 - David Aguayo provided some background that he had reached out to Environmental Health in November prior to the November ALAB meeting and had not received any response. Aguayo would reach out to them again and share what information they may have.
 - Ron Harben concurred with Diefenderfer's comments, noting that the technical information needed to support a position was not yet available and that proceeding now would likely result in simply repeating prior comments.
 - Dan Rodrigues stated that the response would include updated details as Paul Clark had pointed out earlier in the discussion that would build off comments originally made by the ALAB on this issue. He added that a draft comment letter could still be prepared in advance so it would be ready if needed, allowing for easier adjustments should circumstances change.
- b. Fallowed land registry for the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Multi-Benefit Irrigated Land Repurposing (MILR) Program and related amendments to the Agricultural Offset Ordinance and Williamson Act Rules of Procedure – Blaine Reely, SLO County Groundwater Sustainability Department.**
- Blaine Reely provided an overview of the Fallowed land registry for the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin MILR Program and the related amendments to the Agricultural Offset Ordinance and Williamson Act Rules of Procedure. A copy of the presentation can be found here: [alab presentation 2026 01 05-e3a65d6d911158658c0b341db067d1b2](http://alab.presentation.2026.01.05-e3a65d6d911158658c0b341db067d1b2)
 - ALAB members asked questions regarding how the registry platform would function, how operations would be tracked, and the extent of crop data available, including that winegrapes represent approximately 90 percent of planted acreage. Discussion also covered erosion control, the amount of acreage that would need to be fallowed to address basin overdraft (approximately 15,000 acres), and whether property tax considerations might apply to fallowed land.
 - Members inquired whether FSA and NRCS had been consulted regarding available assistance programs. While the Resource Conservation Districts had been involved, FSA and NRCS had not formally participated prior to the meeting. Representatives from both agencies (Hillary Phillips – NRCS and Russell Todd – FSA) present at the meeting outlined available programs, including soil health, erosion control, crop rotation, and irrigation efficiency support, as well as other potential outlets they would investigate.
 - Additional discussion addressed economic feasibility, noting that rising power and production costs limit growers' ability to intensify operations leading to dry farming. Members emphasized the importance of marketable water value, financial considerations for lenders, and incentives needed to make fallowing viable. It was noted that improved

winegrape profitability could increase basin demand and potentially trigger future pumping restrictions.

- Questions were also raised regarding enforcement tools under AB 732 related to agricultural nuisances, and whether options existed to increase basin water storage or supply. It was stated that alternative sources had been evaluated but were not currently feasible.
- Dan Rodrigues asked when the program and proposed amendments would be presented to the Board of Supervisors, whether there was an indication of Board receptiveness, and whether ALAB would have an opportunity to provide input before the proposal advanced to the next phase.
- Blaine Reely clarified that the package would be presented to the Planning Commission on January 8th and noted that the materials were available and included the draft ordinance and proposed revisions to the agricultural offset ordinance. He stated that the Board appeared receptive to the proposal and that a subsequent Board of Supervisors packet would be forthcoming and could be shared with ALAB ahead of the February 6th Board meeting.

VI. Updates from Ag Department Staff.

- Ian Landreth revisited the County's policy regarding audio recordings of ALAB meetings. He noted that County Counsel has advised the recordings are retained until the meeting minutes are approved at the following ALAB meeting, after which the recordings are no longer required to be kept.

VII. Future agenda items/meeting dates, adjournment.

- Elections for Chair and Vice-Chair.
- Updates from the Bio-solids subcommittee.
- Updates on the Fallowed Land Registry for the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin MILR Program and related ordinance amendments.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:33 PM. The next monthly ALAB meeting is scheduled for February 2, 2026.

Respectfully submitted by Ian Landreth, San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture/Weights & Measures.