

Salinas Valley Water Coalition



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Monterey County Board of Supervisors
Supervisor Dave Potter, Chair
240 Church Street
Salinas, Ca 93901

TRANSMITTED VIA FACSIMILE AND EMAIL

7 August, 2002

Dear Chair Potter and Members of the Board;

This letter is written to address the Board's direction to staff on July 23, 2002 regarding revisions to the Draft General Plan, and more specifically the Public Services Element item **#3. Water metering**.

On behalf of the Salinas Valley Water Coalition, I addressed your Board at its July 9th public hearing on this matter. I noted that your staff report on this issue did not accurately reflect my recollection of the Planning Commission's specific recommendation. To reiterate the issue, your staff report stated the following:

"3. Maintain Policy PS-3.2 suggesting that water metering should be required in areas of aquifer overdraft. This policy should be implemented first in the areas where the overdraft is most significant." [page 27 staff report of July 9, 2002]

It is my firm recollection that the Planning Commission recommended water metering in areas of overdraft and **specifically identified that their intent was to have this applicable to North County and Carmel Valley**. On July 9th, I asked your Board to clearly define the areas of overdraft to which this proposed policy would apply and to accept the Planning Commission's recommendation and discussion. It is our belief that the entire Salinas Valley is not in overdraft and should not be included within the scope of this proposed policy.

After your hearing was closed to public testimony, on July 23rd staff's presentation identified 4 areas of the County where "water demand exceeds supply" and identified the **Salinas Valley as an area in "overdraft"**. This was the first time the Salinas Valley has been mentioned in any level of discussion on the Draft General Plan with regards to overdraft. **This is not true**. In fact Subsection 5.15.1 of the draft EIR for the Draft GPU discusses four major groundwater basins in Monterey County (Salinas, Carmel River, North County and El Toro) and notes that very different groundwater conditions exist in each basin:

- a. **In the Salinas Basin, there is a "functional overdraft" which "is not a supply problem, but a distribution problem." (Draft EIR, pp.5.15-5)**
- b. **North County, Carmel River and El Toro Groundwater Basins each have different groundwater problems. (see Draft EIR, pp.5.15-9 to 5.15-17)**

Although the draft EIR recognizes these significant differences in the conditions of these four groundwater basins, the Public Service Element of the proposed General Plan, and your direction to staff on July 23rd, proposes uniform water policies among these four very different basins. The draft EIR recognizes that the groundwater problem in the Salinas Valley is a distribution problem and not a supply problem. There is no evidence or scientific reason to require meters, or to allocate water usage as Policies PS-3.1, PS-7 and PS-3.3 propose, within the Salinas Valley.

The Salinas Valley Water Coalition has been an active participant in working with the Monterey County Water Resources Agency to develop and implement policies that provide solutions to the water problems within the Salinas Valley Basin. We fought the County on this meter issue about 10 years ago. The end result of that court battle essentially provided for an annual reporting of water usage, and the method of calculating that usage would be based on electrical usage records. Our lawsuit was based on CEQA and the County's failure to prepare and identify the potential adverse environmental impacts that would be associated with mandatory metering. Let's not go there again.

We request that the requirement of meters for the Salinas Valley and the other policies in the Draft General Plan that now become applicable to the Salinas Valley because of staff's statement regarding overdraft be deleted and that you defer to the Monterey County Water Resources Agency and to your County Counsel for their review and recommendation on this meter issue as well. We would like to work with them in an effort to resolve this matter.

The Draft General Plan and the Board's direction to staff, does not appear to fully consider the progress made these last years pertaining to the Salinas Valley water problems and issues. It is important that we continue to work together to achieve a resolution. Thank you for your consideration of our request and concerns. We look forward to working with you and/or your staff on these matters.

Thank you,



**Nancy Isakson, Consultant
Salinas Valley Water Coalition**

Cc: Supervisor Fernando Armenta
Supervisor Lou Calcagno
Supervisor Edith Johnsen
Supervisor Judy Pennycook
Steve Collins, Chair MCWRA
Adrienne Grover, County Counsel
All via facsimile