

Many Monterey County residents and groups have actively participated in county and state evaluation, planning and operation of systems to manage our water resources. The Orradre et al. group of prominent South County residents is one of the groups of individuals who have had important influence on many past and present issues. A number of us who are pursuing similar interests in these issues are concerned that the community understand some of the current events so that everyone can speak to the future resolution of our water resource management questions.

PREVENTING SEAWATER INTRUSION AND WATER QUALITY IN SALINAS VALLEY

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) rejected action on a group of landowners' request for a separate proceeding under Water Code Section 275. The Orradre et al. group [comprised of Orradre Ranch, Michel Orradre et al., Margaret Duflock et al., San Bernabe Vineyards, Trivinters, Lawrence R. Trapp et al., California Orchard Co., Salinas Land Co., James R. and Sara L. Harkins, Paris Valley Ranch, Barbara Barnard Smith Trust, Barbara Barnard Smith Living Trust, Helen Margaret Smith Trust, Luis Echenique et al., and Fairview Vineyards] submitted a petition to the SWRCB requesting they proceed to take all appropriate actions to prevent waste, unreasonable use, unreasonable method of use or unreasonable method of diversion of water, as allowed under Water Code Section 275, to prevent seawater intrusion. The Orradre et al. group stated that these proceedings and the water rights adjudication could be combined; that the SWRCB's budget for protection of the Salinas Valley Groundwater basin should be used to advance such proceedings which will impact and address seawater intrusion problems in the northern Salinas Valley by "crafting reasonable pumping limits (section 275) and determining the water rights that such limits may impact (water rights adjudication)."

Mr. Ed Anton, Acting Executive Director for the SWRCB, informed the Orradre et al. group's attorney that no action would be taken on their petition. He further stated that the SWRCB has considered all of the available alternatives, including both unreasonable use proceedings and adjudication. "However, as we have stated on a number of occasions, the SWRCB prefers a local solution to the seawater intrusion problem. To this end, SWRCB staff is working cooperatively with the MCWRA to develop and implement a solution to the seawater intrusion problem. If it appears that adjudication or other action is necessary the SWRCB may take such action. **In the meantime, I urge you, your clients, and all other stakeholders in the Salinas Valley to support the MCWRA effort to develop and implement a local solution to this problem.**"

Let's utilize our tax dollars (as well as individual dollars) in a constructive manner to develop a project, or projects, that will solve the basin's water problems, rather than continue to expend millions of dollars on litigation, which fails to benefit anyone except the attorneys and consultants. To date the Orradre et al group has filed 9 lawsuits against the MCWRA. To date each has either been dismissed, claims denied and/or the

MCWRA granted its request. This continued litigation has cost the taxpayers of Zone 2 and Zone 2A almost a **million dollars** in assessments paid to the MCWRA! This amount does not include the dollars expended by individual landowners and interest groups, who have found it necessary to defend themselves against the actions of the Orradre et al. group. This expenditure of tax dollars, while necessary, has come at a time when MCWRA funds are limited. We need to expedite and complete the environmental documentation and design work for a Salinas Valley Water Project that will solve the basin's seawater intrusion problem. **This is how the taxpayers want to expend their tax dollars --- not on litigation!**

As a matter of background, pursuant to Water Code Section 2100, in 1994 the State Water Resources Control Board formally informed all owners of property with producing wells in the Salinas Valley that they have initiated an investigation of the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin. The Notice stated that the SWRCB would be investigating groundwater production and use, and water management practices as they relate to the water quality problems of the Salinas Valley groundwater basin. The investigation consists of collecting and verifying information on groundwater production and use, fertilizer use, cropping patterns, agricultural practices, water conservation practices, reservoir operations, and physical characteristics of the basin to enable the SWRCB to determine whether action is needed to prevent destruction of or irreparable injury to the quality of the water in the basin.

The Notice also informed individual landowners and Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) that the SWRCB preferred a local solution to the groundwater problems in the Salinas Valley over State action, **“however, if MCWRA fails in its efforts [to resolve the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin water quality problems] then the State will implement a Basin groundwater solution.”**

This investigation continues today. The SWRCB believes that a local solution to our groundwater problems is possible. The Monterey County Water Resources Agency and the various individual interest groups also believe that a local solution is possible and are committed to developing and implementing that solution. However, we need all segments of the community's support.

This is an open request to the Orradre et al group to join other stakeholders within the Valley and work with them and the MCWRA to develop and implement a local solution, including the funding mechanisms necessary, that is fair and equitable and is proportionate to benefits conferred to the lands as required by the California Constitution, as amended by Proposition 218.

Ralph Riva, Ann Myhre, Jim Manassero, Bob Antle, Richard Smith, Roger Moitoso

November 2000