

SALINAS VALLEY WATER COALITION INDEPENDENT GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

TRANSMITTED VIA FACSIMILE

**Monterey County Board of Supervisors
The Honorable Dave Potter, Chair
240 Church Street
Salinas, Ca 93901**

12 November, 2002

Subject: Agricultural Viability Language

Dear Chair Potter and Supervisors:

The Salinas Valley Water Coalition and Independent Growers' Association would like to reiterate the comments in our letter of September 20, 2002 that offered a recommendation to improve the General Plan Update process.

First, let us say that it is unclear from the published agenda for this item, as to whether there will be public comments accepted **or** if it is solely a Board workshop. Therefore, are comments are predicated on the appearance of **no** opportunity for public comment for the above referenced agenda item.

Our September 20th letter suggested that the process would be better served, in the efforts at hand to craft agricultural solutions in the General Plan Update, if all of the key agricultural organizations were included in discussions and development of the recommendations. We were, and remain, concerned that the discussion has been held with the American Farmland Trust, Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society and others and does not include a comprehensive representation of agriculture throughout Monterey County.

We chose not to participate in the discussions of this group because it represents such a limited range of interests and because it was deciding policy in private that will affect all of our farmers, ranchers and landowners. We believe the group who developed these recommendations does not represent all of agriculture's views.

We continue to welcome an open, broad-based group discussion and participation. We recommended then and **now** that the review of these recommendations include all of agriculture. This would make it a more open and inclusive process. Every recognized agricultural organization in the county should be invited to send a representative of the organization's choice. We also propose that this group hold its meetings in public.

We continue to protest the process by which the General Plan Update is influenced by county staff and by individuals and groups from outside this county

and is written outside the scrutiny of the public. The Board of Supervisors has dismissed our recommendation for a Citizens' Advisory Committee to address the entire GPU. Although a less-comprehensive answer, an open, broad-based process that allows discussion among the individuals and groups with direct interest in agricultural policies would resolve some of our worries.

If we are to have buy-in from the agricultural community, they **must** be participants in the process. We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you, and/or your staff, in an open discussion, to craft an alternative to the closed-door meetings that were held during the development of these recommendations.

We offer these comments and suggestions as a positive contribution to the proper conclusion of an important process of local government. Can we meet and form a broad-based group representing agriculture?

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Isakson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a vertical dotted line to its left.

**Nancy Isakson, Consultant
Salinas Valley Water Coalition
Independent Growers' Association**

CC: Board of Supervisors