



EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
GOVERNOR



MATTHEW RODRIGUEZ
SECRETARY FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

State Water Resources Control Board

August 20, 2013

San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors
Room D-430
County Government Center
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

Dear Supervisors Gibson, Mecham, Hill, and Arnold:

PASO ROBLES GROUNDWATER BASIN; WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION RELATED TO DECLINING WATER LEVELS

The mission of the California Water Boards includes proper allocation and protection of the State's water resources. California faces serious water resource challenges with growing demand and the uncertainty of climate change. Every source of potable water must be protected and managed to ensure long term sustainability.

We understand that the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin (Basin) is in a state of serious overdraft with water levels continuing to decline. After several years of study, the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors (Board) approved [The Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Resource Capacity Study](#) in February 2011. The Board then assigned a level of severity III for the main Basin, the most severe of three ratings. I understand that the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors will consider an emergency ordinance on August 27, 2013 to slow the current trend and allow time to develop a basin management strategy. I believe you have the information to understand the threat to the public and the environment, and I urge you to take immediate action to stabilize the situation by approving the ordinance.

In addition to the impacts on water supply, overdrafting a groundwater basin can negatively affect water quality, the environment, and permanently decrease a basin's storage capacity through the consolidation of sediments. Every region of the state has a responsibility to use all available strategies to maximize their water supplies, including conservation, use of recycled water, pumping restrictions, and comprehensive groundwater basin management. Local action is needed now, given limited surface water supplies to recharge the Basin, increasing demand, and the uncertainties on what impact climate change will have on local annual rainfall. Without such action, users dependent on the Basin will likely continue to experience further water level declines and a degradation of water quality.

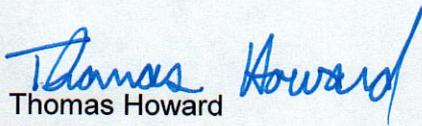
FELICIA MARCUS, CHAIR | THOMAS HOWARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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The Water Boards strongly support and go to great lengths to encourage local solutions to these types of groundwater problems. However, the State Water Resources Control Board has the the responsibility to ensure that the State's waters are managed reasonably.

At this time, I have asked the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board Executive Officer to track and report to me your progress in addressing this serious problem. If you have any questions or wish to discuss our concerns, please contact me at (916) 341-5615 (Tom.Howard@waterboards.ca.gov). You may also contact Barbara Evoy, Deputy Director, Division of Water Rights at (916) 341-5632 (Barbara.Evoy@waterboards.ca.gov), or Ken Harris, Executive Officer, Central Coast Water Board at (805) 549-3140 (Ken.Harris@waterboards.ca.gov).

Sincerely,


Thomas Howard
Executive Director

cc: via e-mail

Jeffrey S. Young
Chair
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Ken Harris
Executive Officer
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board