

PUBLIC COMMENTOR 264 - TOM YARISH, SEPTEMBER 24, 1996

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Hi. I'm Tom Yarish. Many of you know me from previous testimony. I am co-chair of friends of the esteros, which was the lead plaintiff in the previous lawsuit that invalidated the other EIR.

I also represent the environmental action committee of west Marin and I work with Tomales Bay association, invernness association. And I can't remember. I also work informally with the agricultural property rights alliance. On a personal note, before I get started -- and just as a personal note, I would like to fully support the testimony and actions of Brenda Adelman. Speaking on behalf of friends of the esteros, I'm -- have commissioned a couple of consultants to evaluate various aspects of the EIR, in particular volumes 6 and 7, which relate to geology and ground water quality, we find to be seriously deficient in their analysis of impacts of wastewater storage on erosion and ground water conditions which will lead to serious and continual siltation problems, and we find for that reason alone there's very little likelihood that you can have successful storage or irrigation projects in West County. I will be submitting very extensive notes into the record.

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For the record, our consultant is an expert witness known as Gene Kojan (phonetic), licensed soils geologist, who has a great deal of familiarity with this project.

Going beyond that, I'm also a member of the stakeholders group. I've gone to the bulk of those meetings over the last 18 months. I would like to give my wholehearted support to the findings and recommendations of the stakeholders group, with the caution that again, irrigation and storage projects in West County are wholly inappropriate and cannot be done without significant environmental consequences. And again, we will be submitting extensive commentary into the record .

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To give you one example of the geological issues that are in our face, the EIR uses a methodology known as the universal soil loss equation, which is a highly subjective methodology developed in the '30's, I believe, in response to surface irrigation and wasting in the plains states. In this application, it's highly subjective and doesn't treat a myriad of more serious subsurface issues such as piping, drilling, gulleying, advancing progressive deterioration of soil conditions due to the elevated ground water pressures, soil -- what's the word -- -- let's see -- water porosity -- I forget the exact term. All these are judged to be significantly impacted by irrigation and storage in that area. There will be much more extensive commentary, or written notes.

I also support a South County project, where there's highly productive agriculture and land use planning issues, particularly in concert with a joint project with Petaluma I think are extremely promising.

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One of the key failures which I personally resent in the evolution of this EIR is the absolute lack of any mention of a joint project with the City of Petaluma. It may or may

not be feasible, but it seems that the City of Petaluma is predisposed to consider this by the fact that their EIR also has devoted significant consideration to this.

I think the City needs to take a broader view of the cost that it's looking at as justification for a project. There are longer and more important public interest issues than just the rate payers of Santa Rosa, who I deeply sympathize with. They're entitled to something for their money. [But this is a time when we have to consider regional impacts, regional planning issues, and I think that Santa Rosa has an opportunity to do something that is -- is really very praiseworthy -- I would like to give you some recognition for the efforts you have made in advancing the treatment process beyond chlorination and copper reduction in your mains. These are hopeful signs, but they're not going to carry you to the finish line unless we -- we consider some of these more compelling issues.]

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[Also, for West County, I find that the EIR fails to significantly analyze and address serious cost factors such as agricultural practices, management, environmental protections and mitigations, which are somewhat identified and given passing notice, but are really omitted from the financial impact analysis. And here is another serious lapse. I think these costs when fully understood would make any kind of West County agricultural irrigation practices absolutely prohibitive.

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Having said that, I wish you well and will be providing much more commentary in writing. Thank you.]

Mayor Wright:

Thanks Tom. Our last speaker is Stephanie Pappas. Hi Stephanie.