

Katherine Douglas

Public Comment - Group 3

1



From: Randall Tognazzini <rtognazzini@icloud.com>
Sent: Friday, October 6, 2023 4:31 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Agenda Item 23-00955 - Applicant Appeal Case No. 23APL-00023

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Board of Supervisors:

The North Fork Ranch "ponds" are before you on the 10th.

Just imagine 15 acres with large borders holding millions of gallons of water (3-5-acre reservoirs) in an arid over drafted aquifer in the Cuyama Valley. This area is in the middle of an Adjudication Lawsuit just about the available water. Everyone is affected.

These reservoirs are uphill from highway 166 which is an accident waiting to happen with a leak or earthquake!

I sympathize with the developers from an agricultural perspective, however, why didn't someone figure out a way to deal with frost protection before every planting that enormous acreage. There are other ways and Harvard has the resources to install the necessary protection to truly offer sustainable agriculture.

These are not PONDS; this is almost a dam to hold well water.

I do not support the proposed reservoirs and I would ask each of you to vote against and deny the placement of the reservoirs.

Randy

Randall Tognazzini
854 Cypress Ridge Parkway
Arroyo Grande, CA 93420
805 868-1097

Katherine Douglas

From: j thomas <thomas_j40@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 7, 2023 4:40 PM
To: sbcob
Cc: Kathy Beard; Del&Mary Thomas; Mikaela Thomas; Nina Thomas; Bonnie Thomas Olian; Hammer McNair; Geeta Persad; Pascal Nicolas; Tracy Wise; Denny & Hiko Hyder; Jay Thomas
Subject: Oct 10th lem #1 Harvard Reservoir Proposal

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

To: Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors

Topic: Oct 10th Agenda Item #1. Harvard's Reservoir Hearing

Date: 10/6/23

Our family has owned and operated a ranch on the west end of Cuyama valley in the vicinity of Cottonwood Canyon for 5 generations. We strongly support the Planning Commission's denial of Harvard's request to dig any groundwater reservoirs on environmentally sensitive pastureland for the purpose of crop frost protection. Given that the Cuyama Basin has been severely over-pumped for decades (per GPS), the County's Groundwater Resource protection policy within the County's Comprehensive Plan does not support permit requests that lead to further degradation of the groundwater basin. Many viable alternatives, have been presented and discussed that could be used to achieve production goals, rather than wasting our precious groundwater to the inevitable detriment to all.

Thank you,

Jay Thomas
Thomas Family Trust
130 Abbey Rd
Santa Maria CA
93455

Katherine Douglas

From: Ann Dorsey <aedorsey@hotmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 7, 2023 9:21 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Comment on Agenda Item: #1 for the Board of Supervisors Meeting, Tuesday, October 10th

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Board of Supervisors,

I urge you to deny Harvard's request to remove water from the Cuyama Valley. Groundwater is a limited resource and should be reserved for those who live in the area and depend on it for their life and livelihood.

Please protect farmers and the communities in the Cuyama Valley and keep Harvard from removing any more groundwater from there.

Thank you,

Ann Dorsey

Katherine Douglas

From: Matthew Clement <matthew@cuyamabuckhorn.com>
Sent: Sunday, October 8, 2023 11:32 AM
To: sbcob
Subject: Opposition to Harvard Reservoir

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning,

My name is Matthew Clement and I am the executive chef at Cuyama Buckhorn. As you all well know, the western end of the Basin is historically rangeland with very minimal irrigation. The water table in the area of the vineyard is already decreasing from just seven years of irrigation.

These reservoirs will be filled with groundwater, affecting everyone downstream and will adversely impact the natural ecosystem.

Cuyama is predominantly populated with agriculture and farms. At the Buckhorn we go out of our way to utilize this product and support local wines, produce, beef, eggs, and chicken. To see our purveyors affected by this reservoir would be a blow to the backbone of the community.

The reservoirs proposed are extremely large for Santa Barbara County. There are reservoirs in the Cuyama Basin but none close to this size.

I support and encourage the Planning Commissions denial of the permit.

Thank you and warm regards,

--
MATTHEW CLEMENT
HE/THEY
EXECUTIVE CHEF
CUYAMA BUCKHORN
4923 PRIMERO ST
NEW CUYAMA, CA 93254
P: 661.766.2825

Katherine Douglas

From: David Lewis <cuyama2018@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, October 8, 2023 9:09 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Harvard Reservoir Hearing

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

This is the Lewis family, we live in the Cuyama Valley. We are opposed to the reservoir project and we support the staff and Planning Commission's denial of this project for the following reasons:

1. The western end of the Basin is historically rangeland with very minimal irrigation. The water table in the area of the vineyard is already decreasing from just 7 years of irrigation.
2. These reservoirs would be filled with groundwater, affecting everyone downstream and impacting the natural ecosystem as well.
3. Cuyama is agricultural with ranches and farms. These reservoirs will impact the agriculture that exists on the western end.
4. These are extremely large reservoirs for Santa Barbara County. There are reservoirs in the Cuyama Basin, but none close to this size.

Please do not allow another investment corporation to deplete the ground water even further.

Thank You for your consideration.

Dave Lewis

Phone 805-896-6490

Katherine Douglas

From: Noelle Brunelle <noelle.brunelle@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 9, 2023 7:12 AM
To: sbcob
Subject: Proposed Harvard Water Reservoirs in Cuyama Valley

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Good Morning,

My name is Noelle Brunelle and I own and live in a home in New Cuyama. I grew up in Pismo Beach and during my military service spent many years diving the 166 between my home station in Las Vegas and my parents home on the coast.

The western half of the Cuyama Valley has historically been rangeland, with minimal (if any) irrigation to support roaming herds. The introduction of vineyards has changed this; hundreds of acres of what was previously dry field are now dependent on water drawn from the aquifer to sustain growth. Since the vineyard was established the water table in the western portion of the valley has decreased, and land subsidence in Cuyama Valley (0.88 feet according to the department of Water Resources) is the most severe in the county.

Despite this, the North Fork Vineyard proposes constructing three reservoirs on their property. These reservoirs are not flood control or water retention features designed to capture or divert runoff from winter storms. Rather, the sole purpose is to provide a passive method to temper the valley's winter chill. Each of these 5 acre reservoirs would require 43 million gallons of scarce groundwater to fill. This draw would hasten the aquifer's decline, the drying of natural springs, and negatively affect downstream water users. **Similar crop protection could easily be provided with short-term active measures such as wind towers, heaters, cold air drains, and micro-sprayers.**

The proposed reservoirs present other harms to the valley's environment. Historically Cuyama Valley's humidity has been in the single digits. One benefit of low humidity (combined with the valley's altitude) is low airborne insect populations. This allows some local farmers to forego widespread use of pesticides and maintain USDA Organic status. Over the last decade, spray irrigation has increased the valley's humidity to double digits. We now experience thick morning fogs when the temperature and dew point coincide. Insect populations are on the rise; this spring for the first time in recent memory we had noticeable mosquito populations (a disease vector). The proposed uncovered reservoirs, if constructed, will increase the valley's humidity and hasten the migration of airborne pests to our valley.

Based on these factors, I strongly support the Planning Commission's decision to deny this permit.

Respectfully,
Noelle Brunelle

Katherine Douglas

From: Miah Ebels Duggan <mebelsduggan@college.harvard.edu>
Sent: Sunday, October 8, 2023 1:41 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Harvard's Cuyama Water Grab

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

My name is Miah Ebels-Duggan. I'm a first year at Harvard College studying Environmental Science and Public Policy, and am a part of Harvard University Environmental Justice and Stop Harvard Land Grabs.

I'm writing concerning Harvard's permit application for well drilling in the Cuyama area basin. These wells can only be filled with groundwater, in a basin named one of 21 critically overdrafted basins in the state. Healthy and sufficient groundwater is absolutely critical in an area that naturally formed as dry rangeland; communities throughout the area which this basin provides for will be massively affected, and natural ecosystems will be thrown out of balance.

It is your obligation to the land, the people, and the ecosystems of Santa Barbara County to deny this permit, as has happened multiple times in the past. This decision has the support of Harvard students like myself, who are working from inside the institution to disrupt its extractive practices.

Thank you,
Miah Ebels-Duggan

Katherine Douglas

From: Sunday <sundayh@protonmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 9, 2023 12:34 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Please Deny Water Use Permit for Harvard

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

As a Harvard alumni from the class of 2020, I am concerned that if Harvard were to receive this permit, the building of new reservoirs could deplete critical groundwater reserves, impacting both the everyday individuals who live in the surrounding area as well as the natural biome that exists in Cuyama valley. This project would drain access to necessary local resources and send the associated profit to folks on the other side of the country. I hope the Planning Committee will move to deny the permit tomorrow.

Thank you,
Sunday Hull, Class of 2020

Katherine Douglas

From: nina thomas <ninaleighthomas5@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 9, 2023 2:01 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Tues 10th Hearing, Agenda Item #1: Deny Harvard Request

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Board of Supervisors,

Because I'm not able to attend tomorrow's hearing in person, I'm writing to ask that you support the planning commission's denial of Harvard's request to dig groundwater reservoirs in Cuyama Basin. My family has owned and operated a ranch in Cuyama valley for five generations and we are committed to protecting the basin water supply for generations to come. Harvard's request goes against the county groundwater resource protection policy and would greatly contribute to the degradation of this already over-pumped basin. There are many alternatives that have been presented and would serve their production needs. Please show your support for the long term health of this region and community by denying Harvard's request.

Thank you,
Nina Thomas
Thomas Family Trust
130 Abbey Rd
Santa Maria, CA

Sent from my iPhone

Katherine Douglas

From: Rush McNair <rush.mcnair@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 9, 2023 2:15 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Oct 10th Hearing - Harvard Reservoir

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

To: Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors

Topic: Oct 10th Hearing in re. Harvard reservoir permit

Date: 2023-10-09

I am a member of the Thomas family which has owned and operated a ranch on the west end of Cuyama valley in the vicinity of Cottonwood Canyon for five generations. We strongly support the Planning Commission's denial of Harvard's request to dig any groundwater reservoirs on environmentally sensitive pastureland. Given that the Cuyama Basin has been severely over-pumped for decades (per GPS), the County's Groundwater Resource protection policy within the County's Comprehensive Plan does not support permit requests that lead to further degradation of the groundwater basin. Many viable alternatives have been presented and discussed that could be used to achieve production goals, rather than wasting our precious groundwater to the inevitable detriment to all.

Sincerely,

Rush McNair
130 Abbey Road
Santa Maria, CA 93455

Katherine Douglas

From: Bonnie Olian <bonnie.olian@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 9, 2023 2:46 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: October 10th Hearing, Agenda Item #1: Deny Harvard Request

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello Santa Barbra Board of Supervisors,

My family has owned and operated a ranch on the west end of Cuyama valley in the vicinity of Cottonwood Canyon for 5 generations. We strongly support the Planning Commission's denial of Harvard's request to dig any groundwater reservoirs on environmentally sensitive pastureland for the purpose of crop frost protection. Given that the Cuyama Basin has been severely over-pumped for decades (per GPS), the County's Groundwater Resource protection policy within the County's Comprehensive Plan does not support permit requests that lead to further degradation of the groundwater basin. Many viable alternatives, have been presented and discussed that could be used to achieve production goals, rather than wasting our precious groundwater to the inevitable detriment to all.

Thank you,
Bonnie Thomas-Olian
Thomas Family Trust
Date: 10/09/2023

Katherine Douglas

From: M Thomas <mikaelathomas@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 9, 2023 2:57 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Tues 10th Hearing, Item #1: Deny Harvard Reservoir Request

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Board of Supervisors,

I'm writing to express my strong support for the planning commission's denial of Harvard's request to dig groundwater reservoirs in Cuyama Basin. My family has owned and operated a ranch in Cuyama valley for more than a century and we are deeply invested in protecting and prolonging the area's fragile and finite water supply. Harvard's request goes against the county groundwater resource protection policy and would greatly contribute to the degradation of this already over-pumped basin. There are many alternatives that have been presented and would serve their production needs. Requests such as Harvard's display a complete lack of care for the long-term impact on the region and its residents and we look to you to send a clear message that their short-term profit is not more important to Santa Barbara County than its citizens.

Thank you,
Mikaela Thomas
Thomas Family Trust
130 Abbey Rd
Santa Maria, CA

Katherine Douglas

From: bonnie@sleepycreekranch.com
Sent: Monday, October 9, 2023 3:23 PM
To: sbcob
Cc: Bonnie
Subject: North Fork Ranch Frost Ponds Project

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Please share my comment with the Board of Supervisors and include it in Public Comment for the meeting October 10, 2023.

I am Bonnie Goller, co-trustee of the Sleepy Creek Ranch Trust, Chumash archaeologist/anthropologist and historian. I have resided at 2255 Cottonwood Canyon Road, New Cuyama, for the last 40 years, in an original homestead built in 1893. My 700-acre property, the Sleepy Creek Ranch, is due south of this project. I share a one-mile+ boundary (approximate) with Brodiaea, Inc/North Fork Ranch (my APNs of the shared boundary are 147-070-017, 147-070-018, and 147-050-031). I am opposed to the construction of frost ponds. The project is downstream of me, as the aquifer flows.

Historically, I think it is noteworthy to mention that the original homesteaders of my property (Nancy Kelsey and family) abandoned their homestead claim in 1900, because they were dependent on rainfall and couldn't grow enough hay to feed their livestock. The western end of Cuyama Valley-- Wasioja Canyon, Schoolhouse Canyon, Cottonwood Canyon-- has never been commercially farmed or irrigated. All of the old-timers will tell you the properties on the western end of the valley have never been good for anything but rangeland as there was hardly enough water to support a small herd of cattle.

My first 30 years here (1984-2014) I witnessed cattle ranchers (or lease-holders) hauling in supplemental water for the cattle on the "Russell Lease" as the primary water source, Cottonwood Creek, would usually go dry by April, but in some years the creek might not run at all. Often, the lease-holder would pull the cattle off before the grasses had been fully grazed, because hauling water was simply too expensive, and the original well (approx. 1-mile from my house, circa 1950) didn't produce much water.

In 2014, Brodaeia procured permits to drill new wells. One of those wells was a mere 500 feet north of my property line. To my knowledge, that well was abandoned (along with two others) because they didn't produce the quantity of water Brodaeia desired. Brodaeia was looking for vast amounts of water, 1000 gallons per minute (gpm)... here, in an arid high desert climate with an average rainfall of 10-12 inches a year.

2014 was also the year the USGS report was issued regarding the Cuyama Basin aquifer, with serious overdrafting of groundwater, and documented land subsidence. We are all now being sued by "Big Ag" (Grimmway Farms and Bolthouse) for our groundwater rights. I feel like our groundwater is under siege by Bg Ag. Three frost ponds with a withdrawal of 135 acre-feet of groundwater will have further impact on the overdrafted basin, and especially the plants, wildlife, humans, and the land at

the western end of the valley. We're already seeing the loss of Valley Oaks (*Quercus lobata*) in Cottonwood Canyon.

Common folks, those who don't have deep pockets and corporate backing, are being squeezed out; we can't afford to drop our well pumps deeper, or drill deeper, bigger wells. Since 1887 when the first homesteader, Addison Powell, filed a claim in Cottonwood Canyon and Callaway Heath filed in Schoolhouse Canyon, we've all lived with the reality of "dry-farming," with water conservation and within the means of our annual rainfall.

I'm proud to be a part of the agricultural community of Cuyama Valley. My family and I grow olive trees for oil. We have 125 trees planted in Old World drought-tolerant methods and use little water (approx. 1-acre foot per year). My grandchildren helped to plant those trees, and I hope their grandchildren will help them to harvest when the time comes.

I support the planning commission's decision to deny the permit for frost ponds on the North Fork Ranch.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Bonnie Goller

Katherine Douglas

From: Pamela Baczuk <pambaczuk@fastmail.fm>
Sent: Monday, October 9, 2023 3:28 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Comments for Agenda Item #1 Oppose Harvard Reservoir Project

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Thank you Chair Williams, Supervisors Lavignino, Hartman, Nelson and Capps for your careful consideration of this proposed project that would impact the Cuyama Valley.

You are all well aware of the critically over-drafted groundwater in the Cuyama Valley and the fact that of 21 designated over-drafted basins in California, the Cuyama Valley is one of the most critical, one of the first to be required to create a groundwater sustainability plan and now the first to additionally be in adjudication for groundwater rights.

Beginning in 2018, when Brodiaea Inc, aka Northfork Vineyard, aka Harvard proposed the construction of freeze ponds on its property, the proposal has been opposed by local residents, environmental professionals, and experienced ranchers and farmers who have pointed out that this method of so-called prevention of frost to the vines is neither an effective nor a responsible use of the water. These 3 reservoirs, proposed at 5 acres each, would drain 43 million gallons of groundwater and need to be constantly replenished.

Triple digit Cuyama summers would contribute to a significant amount of evaporation.

One needs only to notice the waste water treatment pond evaporation on 166 in dry times.

The most recent denial of this project was in March 2023 from the Santa Barbara Planning Commission. Condor's Hope vineyard owners Roberta Jaffe and Steve Glieman showed photos of Northfork Vineyards' vines after a significant frost. The leaves on the vines on which water was used for frost protection were brown and dead, while the ones on which the wind turbines were used were still green.

In that hearing, not only local farmers and ranchers commented on how these ponds will further negatively impact the groundwater levels in the western basin, we heard from Harvard affiliates, staff, and alumni that Harvard is purchasing land in many regions including in other countries with the intent of large financial returns from a relatively low-cost investment, exploiting the natural resources and demonstrating little regard for the local inhabitants. Please see the Harvard Crimson report from March 30, 2023: <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/3/30/hmc-reservoirs-vineyard-criticism/> and an earlier report from March 6, 2019: <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/3/6/hmc-vineyard-environmental-review/>

I urge the Board of Supervisors to deny this appeal and reject Harvard's proposed project to protect the remaining groundwater in the Cuyama Valley for current and future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns.

Pamela Baczuk
New Cuyama, CA 93254
310 699 6538
pambaczuk@fastmail.fm