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Via email only: sbcob@co.santa-barbar.ca.us

Janet Wolf, Chair  
SB County Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Comments on Agenda Item #4 - Water Well Permits and Policy Direction

Dear Chair Wolf and members of the Board:

Yesterday the temperature hit 85 degrees in SB and 86 degrees in SM. Our winter has not been much of one and we still have 5 days left of it before spring. There is virtually no snowpack in the Sierras and Lake Cachuma will go "dry" in 6 months. In 2014 the USGS estimated to a 90% certainty that the West was in a 10 year drought. That percentage is now higher. We are in year 4 of that drought. Reduced rainfall and warmer temperatures are packing a one-two punch to our water supplies. Less rainfall means less surface water available for drinking water, food production, and wildlife. It also means less groundwater replenishment will occur. Warmer temperatures mean less snowpack. Snowpack is important as it stores and then releases water over time when we need it most. Without snowpack, 30% of our water storage is gone. This picture may be the new "normal" with respect to precipitation, snowpack, and water availability, forcing us to begin the process of determining what is unreasonable use or unreasonable methods of using water within the county. CA Constitution Art. 10, Sec. 2 and Water Code Sec. 100. As sub-divisions of the state, counties are fully empowered under their police powers to exercise this authority, make these findings, and legislate restrictions. Time is not on our side to act and I urge you to act without delay.

With respect to this agenda item, I support the following:

1. Declaring a water well moratorium as requested by the MWD. Other counties have or are in the process of enacting similar restrictions. Montecito will necessarily turn to more groundwater pumping to make up for traditional supply deficits. For now, this source of water must be set aside for domestic uses.
2. Requiring all new, rehabilitated or replaced water wells to be metered and that such permits be discretionary (within and outside water districts). The City of Sacramento is installing smart water meters to facilitate reporting.

3. Requiring all existing water wells in groundwater basins that are threatened with or are in decline, to also be metered. At a minimum, request staff to report back to the Board with a status on the number of outstanding wells, their locations, whether they are in use, have been abandoned, sizing, and estimated water use. To only require new wells to be metered will not provide a complete picture of how much water is being extracted from groundwater basins. The more information we have, the better job we can do in managing groundwater use.
4. Direct staff to start the discussion with all water districts to determine who will take the lead in forming Sustainable Groundwater Management Districts under the new state law and report back to the Board. It is important to know if there are areas outside of the water districts but within areas subject to regulation under the new state law, that will require compliance and how that will be achieved.
5. The Montecito Groundwater Basin currently is regarded as low priority according to the CA Department of Water Resources/CASGEM. Clearly this basin is of much higher priority to those relying on it. Are there other basins within the county that should receive more attention than what is being proposed by Sacramento?

Sincerely,



Jeffrey S. Young