



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 303, Los Alamos, CA 93440



"WORKING TO SAVE RANCHING"

January 14, 2015

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

Re: Coastal Commission Staff Modifications to Ag Buffer Ordinance for Coastal Zone.

The Santa Barbara County Cattlemen's Association wishes to express our collective objection to two proposed modifications by the Coastal Commission staff in the Ag Buffer Ordinance as it will affect the Coastal Zone

Suggested Modification No. 2 – the addition of E.3:

The issue of siting walking and biking trails in the buffer was a subject of substantial discussion at the Agricultural Advisory Committee because these trails by their very nature can result in conflicts between ag and the trail users. First, placing them in the buffer can cause the ag operator to install a much more substantial fence to keep the people and their dogs away from their livestock, and maybe even a solid fence to protect the operator from claims of damage from the application of chemicals. Even with a very substantial fence or a solid wall, placing a recreational trail adjacent to an ag operation can be a recipe for conflict and the ultimate loss of ag viability. The Commission staff wants to add a new test "would significantly diminish or result in adverse effects to public access or recreation." The words "adverse effects" is such a broad term that it has no real meaning – the Commission staff generally assumes that denying the public a trail has an adverse effect on public access and recreation. In short, this one should not be accepted as written.

Suggested Modification No. 3 – the additional wording for F.d:

First, the second line of the insertion doesn't need clarification, since it uses "as close as possible" and "as feasible" – it has to be one or the other, but not both. The substantive problem with this language is the restriction on the fence or barrier. If it can't have an adverse impact on scenic resources, it probably won't be substantial enough to keep trespassers and their animals out of the ag land, and, if it can't exclude wildlife, then it can't exclude domestic dogs and cats so it is useless in protecting livestock, free-range chickens, etc., orchards from root rot, and so on. Conversely, forcing the ag operator to install an effective fence can result in the unintended consequence of impairing wildlife movement.

We understand that the County staff considers these minor modifications in the big picture of getting a decent ag buffer ordinance and ensure that no more productive ag land is threatened or converted as a result of encroaching urban development, which includes residential ranchettes. But, if the intent is to preserve ag viability, these two proposed modifications run contrary to that objective. Moreover, it seems the clear objective of the modifications is to facilitate trails, not to protect agriculture.

Sincerely,

Andy Mills, President