

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

(408) 454-2022



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICE
701 OCEAN STREET, ROOM 312 SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA 95060

June 15, 1998

AGENDA: June 23 1998

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

SUBJECT: WATSONVILLE SLOUGHS MANAGEMENT

Members of the Board:

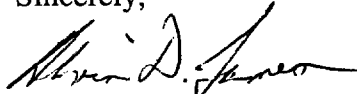
On June 9, 1998, your Board considered a report from Planning Public Works and Environmental Health on water quality management activities in the Watsonville Slough System (Attachment 1). Your Board continued the item to June 23, and directed that staff provide additional information in response to a letter from the California Coastal Commission dated June 8, 1998 (Attachment 2).

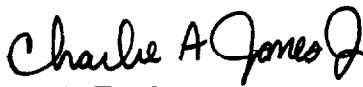
Coastal Commission staff suggests that the County continue to sponsor periodic meetings among stakeholders interested in improved management of the slough system. This suggestion goes beyond the staff recommendation that county staff participate in such meetings. We can agree to continue to sponsor several meetings per year, as the need arises to discuss and coordinate ongoing efforts. This could probably be done at nominal cost and 15-30 hours of staff time per year.

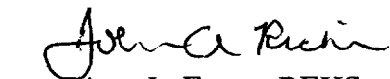
Although we are able to sponsor periodic meetings, we would encourage other agencies and stakeholders to take leadership roles in various aspects of slough management of interest to them. We support efforts to improve protection and management of the slough system, but do not foresee the County taking on any additional leadership role in those efforts in the near future, given the other higher priorities for improved water resources management in the county, recently considered by your Board.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that your Board direct staff to sponsor future meetings as needed to coordinate improved management of the Watsonville Sloughs System and adopt the other recommendations contained in May 29, 1998, letter of the Directors of Planning, Public Works and Environmental Health.

Sincerely,


Alvin D. James
Planning Director


For John A. Fantham
Director-of Public Works


for Diane L. Evans, REHS
Environmental Health Director

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

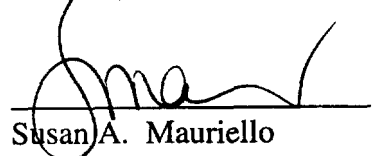
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Watsonville Sloughs

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RECOMMENDED

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan A. Mauriello', is written over a horizontal line.

Susan A. Mauriello

County Administrative Officer

Attachments

cc: City of Watsonville

AMBAG

Watsonville Wetlands Watch

California Coastal Commission

Agricultural Commissioner

Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Water Quality Protection Program

Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District

Natural Resource Conservation Service, Salinas

Attachment 1
147-191

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

GOVERNMENTAL CENTER



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

701 OCEAN STREET, ROOM 400, SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA 95060
(408) 454-2580 FAX: (408) 464-2131 TDD: (408) 464-2123

May 29, 1998

Agenda: June 9, 1998

Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, California 95060

WATSONVILLE SLOUGHS SYSTEM - WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Dear Members of the Board:

On June 24, 1997, your Board directed Planning, Environmental Health Services and the Department of Public Works to continue an additional year of water quality monitoring in the Watsonville Sloughs System, to pursue implementation of an agricultural watershed stewardship program and to report back to your Board on or before June 9, 1998.

Background

As you know, the Watsonville Sloughs System is the largest remaining freshwater wetland habitat on the Central Coast. The diversity of habitats present within this watershed and its occurrence on the Pacific Coast flyway make the slough system especially important as a refuge, feeding and resting area for migratory, winter and resident waterfowl. There is tremendous local interest in the protection of this unique resource. The slough system consists of six major branches: Watsonville Slough, Harkins Slough, Hanson Slough, Struve Slough, West Branch of Struve Slough and Gallighan Slough. The sloughs receive runoff from a 13,000 acre watershed area which includes a mix of urban, industrial, rural residential, agricultural and open space areas.

The Watsonville Sloughs Water Resources Management Plan (the Plan) prepared by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) with the participation of the County, the City of Watsonville and other local interests was accepted by your Board on March 12, 1996. In response to Board direction, Planning and Environmental Health Services staff, with the cooperation of the City of Watsonville staff, continued to hold periodic meetings for the purpose of information transfer and the coordination of water quality monitoring and other research in the Watsonville Sloughs System. These meetings were extremely informational and well attended.

Water Quality Findings

Basic water quality parameters in the sloughs, such as dissolved oxygen, conductivity, pH, temperature, turbidity, ammonia, nitrate and total suspended solids, were sampled by staff at the Watsonville City Utilities Lab on a quarterly basis. Environmental Health staff monitored slough waters for trace metals four times from September 1996 to August 1997. Staff also tested freshwater clams for accumulation of trace metals and synthetic organic compounds during November 1996. Test **results** were consistent with most previous studies. Although trace metal levels are occasionally elevated, they do not appear to be at levels that threaten biota. However, alarming levels of DDT and its degraded products **and** toxapbene were found at levels potentially harmful to biota. Although prohibited from use for many years, these environmentally persistent pesticides remain adhered to clay particles in soil **and** sediment. It is the suspension of soil particles in water runoff that releases these pesticides into the water column making them biologically available. To address this problem it is necessary to focus on measures to keep agricultural soils from entering the water of the sloughs. The extent of soil erosion problems is further demonstrated by the level of effort expended by the Department of Public Works to keep sediment cleared from the roads and by the Planning Department Code Enforcement staff to process the large number of erosion control violations in the Watsonville Sloughs System watershed.

Proposed County Activities

Continued water quality monitoring is not being recommended by staff at this time. Staff believes that the significant water quality issues in the Watsonville Sloughs System have been adequately characterized and that resources for water quality monitoring need to be directed to other parts of the County. Ongoing monitoring of contaminants in biota is being considered by the State.

As the majority of the land in this watershed under the County's jurisdiction is in agriculture, it is recommended that the County focus on soil conservation measures. The most benefit from limited County resources would be achieved by staff's continued participation in ongoing programs that are addressing the problems of agricultural runoff. The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary's Water Quality Protection Program (**WQPP**) is developing a detailed agricultural runoff action plan which will focus on generating farmers interest in watershed stewardship through the use of economic incentives, regulatory coordination, education and training.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) assists farmers willing to invest in soil **conservation** practices by providing up to 70% in cost-share funding. As access to EQIP funds is dependent on a watershed's designation as a geographical priority area your Board directed staff to pursue the designation of the Watsonville Sloughs System as a NRCS geographical priority area (GPA). Planning staff was successful in this effort as the proposal ranked ninth out of fifty statewide. A GPA is eligible for funding for a maximum of five years. Over \$73,000 was allocated for the first year of funding under the federal fiscal year of **1997/98**. To ensure continued EQIP funding of the Watsonville Sloughs Geographic Priority Area, new funding for future **GPA's** and the expansion of other

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NRCS resources into Santa **Cruz** County, a good working relationship needs to be cultivated with the new NRCS Area Conservationist.


With all of the above ongoing activities and their direct effects on the Watsonville Sloughs Watershed, **it** is suggested that the Watsonville Sloughs Water Quality group continue to meet on an as needed basis.

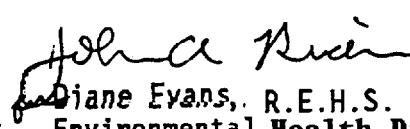
It is therefore **RECOMMENDED** that your Board:

1. Accept and file this report; and
2. Direct the Chairperson of the Board to write to the NRCS Area Conservationist to express appreciation for the funding received **and** to outline the additional needs of the County; and
3. Direct staff to continue to actively participate in any future Watsonville Sloughs Water Quality meetings and other related programs.

Sincerely,


 Alvin D. James
 Planning Director


 John A. Fantham
 Director of Public Works


 Diane Evans, R.E.H.S.
 Environmental Health Director

ADJ/DB:714

RECOMMENDED:


 SUSAN A. MAURIELLO
 County Administrative Officer

cc: City of Watsonville
AMBAG
 Watsonville Wetlands Watch
 California Coastal Commission
 Agricultural Commissioner
 Santa **Cruz** County **Farm** Bureau
 Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Water Quality Protection Program
 Santa **Cruz** County Resource Conservation District
 Natural Resource Conservation Service, Aptos and Salinas Offices

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

CENTRAL COAST AREA OFFICE
725 FRONT STREET, SUITE 900
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060

IMPA' REG (415) 824-5200

Attachment 150 

June 8, 1998


Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
701 Ocean Street,
Santa Cruz, Ca 95660

RE: *Watsonville Slough System -- Water Quality Management*

Dear Supervisors,

Coastal Commission staff has reviewed County staff's update on the Watsonville Slough system and are supportive of the main recommendation to implement erosion control measures. However, we also continue to believe that opportunities should be identified and pursued for restoration and enhancement projects in the system and that these would best be guided by an overall Slough Master Plan. Continued forums among stakeholders would help sustain and forward interest in such endeavors. County staff recommends that you direct them to participate in any future meetings. We would additionally suggest that the County continue to sponsor such periodic gatherings.

Sincerely,



Tami Grove
Deputy Director

6/9/98

TO: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FROM: JIM VAN HOUTEN
WATSONVILLE WETLANDS WATCH.

SUBJECT: WATSONVILLE SLOUGHS SYSTEM
WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT
(ITEM #43)

THIS IS TO REQUEST THAT YOU CONTINUE
SUBJECT ITEM ON YOUR 6/9/98 AGENDA
TO PERMIT AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE BY
WATSONVILLE WETLANDS WATCH AND OTHER
INTERESTED PARTIES.

WE DID NOT RECEIVE NOTICE OR A COPY OF
THE STAFF REPORT UNTIL YESTERDAY AFTERNOON
(MONDAY). WE ARE MEETING WITH OTHERS
ON 6/11/98 IN THIS REGARD.

WE GENERALLY SUPPORT THE STAFF RECOMMEND-
-ATIONS. BUT FEEL THAT THEY DON'T GO
FAR ENOUGH. WE WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT
ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND INFORMATION

WE REQUEST A TWO WEEK (MINIMUM)
CONTINUANCE. WE CAN RESPOND IN 1 WEEK
BUT THIS WILL LIMIT RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

Jim Van Houten