



County of Santa Cruz

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

701 OCEAN STREET, SUITE 500, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4069
(831) 454-2200 FAX: (831) 454-3262 TDD: (831) 454-2123

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AGENDA: 4/17/01

March 30, 2001

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION

Dear Members of the Board:

Attached is the Annual Report of the Water Advisory Commission for calendar year 2000. I recommend that the Board accept and file this report and direct the Chairman to thank the members of the Commission for their efforts on the County's behalf.

Sincerely,

TONY CAMPOS, Chairman
Board of Supervisors

TC:ted

cc: Water Advisory Commission

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County of Santa Cruz

WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION

701 OCEAN STREET, 4TH FLOOR, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
 (831) 454-2580 FAX: (831) 464-2131 TDD: (831) 454-2123

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION 2000 ANNUAL REPORT

This report summarizes the activities and accomplishments of the Santa Cruz County Water Advisory Commission (WAC) during 2000. This year was notable in that the Commission facilitated the exchange of ideas between the Commission, Board of Supervisors, water purveyors, and local environmental groups concerning a proposal for a County-wide Water Conservation Plan. Additionally, it was an active year for individual Commission members.

CORRESPONDENCE AND RELATED EVENTS

Several letters were prepared on behalf of the Commission including a letter submitted to the Board of Supervisors commenting on the proposed County-wide Water Conservation Plan. Another pertinent letter from the WAC expressed recognition that the Interagency Water Resources Working Group and its water conservation subcommittee are logical forums from which any county-wide plan should be developed. The WAC encouraged the IWRWG to continue its development of a water conservation plan that could serve as a county-wide plan. This letter went on to recommend certain elements that the WAC would like to see incorporated into the plan.

The Commission actively participated in the review and discussion of the above items. This report describes organizational activities, additional significant items discussed and meetings attended by individual Commissioners.

ROLES OF THE WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION

The Commission was established in 1975 to serve as a policy advisory body to the Board of Supervisors on issues relating to the use and protection of the County's water resources. The roles of the Commission, as outlined in its bylaw, were revised in 1996 and are as follows:

1. Advise the Board of Supervisors (Board) on all issues impacting water resources in Santa Cruz County, including but not limited to the following categories:
 - a. Water quality and conservation.
 - b. Water supply development, storage and distribution.
 - c. Forestry and watershed management.
 - d. Preservation of fish, wildlife, and riparian habitat.
 - e. Groundwater extraction.
 - f. On-site sewage disposal systems.
 - g. Recreation.
 - h. Water reclamation.
 - i. Public health and safety.
 - j. Monterey Bay preservation.

2. As appropriate, comment upon or participate in the formulation, implementation, review and updating of water oriented plans and policies such as the following:

- a. Local agency water management plans.
- b. Water resource development proposals.
- c. Environmental impact reports/statements.
- d. Santa Cruz County Water Master Plan/General Plan.
- e. County ordinances, and departmental policies and regulations.

3. The duties and responsibilities outlined above will necessarily be limited by staffing, funding, and other resources available to the Commission. Therefore, the Commission will utilize discretion in devoting time to those activities which are most important to achieving its overall goal of enhancing and preserving Santa Cruz county water resources. Individual Commissioners are authorized and encouraged to sit on and/or attend local committees as Commission representatives. County departments (and in particular the Water Resources Division of the Planning Department, Environmental Health, and Public Works) will assist the Commission in its work, by including the Commission in water related correspondence, and by having staff provide timely oral reports on pending issues,

MEETING DATES, TIME AND LOCATION

Meetings are held at 4:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each active month in the County Governmental Center Planning conference room. (January and August are considered inactive months). Agendas are posted five days in advance of meetings, and are distributed to all Board members, local water districts, AMBAG, interested persons and the press.

COMMISSION STRUCTURE

The Commission consists of seven members, five of whom are concerned citizens appointed by individual supervisors and two that are appointed at-large. The two at-large positions represent public water purveyors and private or mutual water companies in the County. David Reetz was elected as Chairperson this year. Al Haynes was elected as Vice-Chair. The Commission was pleased to welcome this year new commissioner Richard Anderson representing the 4th Supervisorial District.

Membership during 2000 was as follows:

- 1 st District: David Reetz
- 2nd District: Frank Siri
- 3rd District: Linda Wilson
- 4th District: Richard Anderson
- 5th District: Bruce Oneto
- At-large: Al Haynes
- Mutual: Betty Petersen

COMMISSION STAFF

Michael Cloud, a staff Hydrologist in the Water Resources Division of the Planning Department, funded by the Flood Control and Water Conservation District, served as Administrative Secretary to the Commission throughout

calendar year 2000. Mr. Cloud took over the administrative duties from the previous administrative staff, Bruce Laclergue, who assumed the role of Water Resources Manager in 1999.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance by Commission members is shown on the attached roster. The Commission typically recesses for vacation during the month of August, and, due to logistical constraints, the WAC also does not meet in January. This year, the October meeting was canceled largely due to time constraints on the administrative staff.

ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Listed below are the principal issues and events that were discussed by the Water Advisory Commission during the year:

1. Santa Margarita Groundwater Issues

Dialogue about groundwater management issues in the Santa Margarita area closely paralleled discussions held at the Santa Margarita Groundwater Basin Advisory Committee. Both advisory bodies were directed at efforts to pursue a regional water supply planning effort. Significant issues discussed by the Commission included development and use of reclaimed wastewater, Urban Water Management Plans, issues related to the establishment of a water replenishment district, and the identification of potential groundwater recharge locations within the Santa Margarita region. Dialogue involved the identification of artificial recharge project locations and protecting lands for their natural recharge characteristics. The expansion of the Mt. Herman Conference Center was also addressed because its potential impacts on the strained groundwater resources within the Santa Margarita region. Several Commissioners have been independently active in this region throughout the year on a myriad of other issues.

2. Pajaro Valley Water Supply Project and Groundwater Management Issues

Due to the magnitude of the groundwater overdraft within the Pajaro Valley, this topic is likely to remain on the WAC agenda for many years. The PVWMA 1993 Basin Management Plan indicated that groundwater use in the basin amounted to 70,000 acre-feet per year; whereas the natural recharge to the basin only amounts to 25,000 acre-feet per year. The WAC has been following the progress of several PVWMA water supply projects to help alleviate the overdraft conditions. The WAC has also been following the Board's consideration of declaring a groundwater emergency within the Pajaro Valley. Other issues that the WAC has been following in the Pajaro Valley include: PVWMA's use of an agricultural water use questionnaire to obtain local water use data, PVWMA's State of the Basin report and Basin Management Plan 2000, the possible acquisition CVP water by PVWMA, and the Gardiner plan, a local approach to balance the Pajaro Valley overdraft.

3. Countywide Water Conservation Plan

The call for a county-wide water conservation plan was a major topic with the WAC in 2000. The proposal came from the local Sierra Club and other environmental groups out of concern over dwindling water resources, the different water jurisdictional boundaries, and various levels of authority. After the proposal was presented to the Board, the Board requested that the WAC develop conceptual ideas on how to implement such a plan. The IWRWG responded to the proposal indicating that they had already formed a subcommittee to evaluate conservation efforts and that the individual water agencies were already complying with best management practices, as recommended by the State. The IWRWG also indicated that it would be a more appropriate organization to recommend and implement conservation practices. The WAC formed a subcommittee to consider issues raised by the proposed plan and the response from the TWRWG. As background information, the WAC

obtained copies of the Monterey County's draft water conservation plan and the State's recommended best management practices. Presentations were made to the WAC by members of the local environmental groups and the IWRWG to explain their groups' positions. The effort culminated this calendar year in draft letters prepared for the Board and the IWRWG. The letter to the IWRWG concurred that the IWRWG and its water conservation subcommittee are logical forums from which any county-wide plan should be developed. This letter went on to recommend certain elements that the WAC would like to see incorporated into the plan.

4. Proposed County Well metering Ordinance

It is recognized by all local water purveyors that there is a deficiency between water consumed and that which is naturally recharged within this County. One piece of missing information from the County water budget is the amount of groundwater that is consumed by small private water systems. A map was prepared that identified areas within the County where groundwater levels have shown significant declines, stream base flows have been impacted, or seawater has intruded into the freshwater aquifer. These areas were designated "Areas of Critical Concern." Before a comprehensive plan could be developed to remediate the overdraft situation within these areas, more extraction data was needed from the private water users. It was proposed that meters be required for all new wells to be constructed in the areas of "Critical Concern." The WAC was kept apprized of the status of this ordinance throughout its development. Due to the strong public opposition to the proposed ordinance, the Board requested that staff evaluate alternative methods for acquiring the needed information.

5. Role and Authority of the Water Advisory Commission

At the request of the newest member of the WAC, Commissioner Anderson, the role and authority of the WAC were discussed at several of the WAC meetings. This discussion was helpful in clarifying the WAC's role relative to the myriad of other local, State, and Federal agencies charged with different aspects of water management.

ADDITIONAL SIGNIFICANT ITEMS

The Commission also reviewed or followed the progress of the following issues and ongoing projects:

- The compilation of data into a County maintained Graphical Information System
- Soquel Creek Water District's evaluation of future water sources
- The proposed Mt. Herman Conference Center expansion
- The change in storage capacity at the Loch Lomond Reservoir
- The Little Hoover Commission report on residential water use
- The sale of Waterman Gap to the Sempervirens Fund
- Misc. Groundwater issues related to quarry operations within the County
- The City of Santa Cruz water supply and conservation plans
- Tertiary treatment of waste water
- County of Monterey's restriction on new development
- The City of Watsonville's restriction on water service to unincorporated areas
- Cooperative efforts between various water purveyors to solve regional water problems

It should be noted that Commissioners attended a wide range of public meetings on water resource related matters. Their attendance at other public meetings occurs either in the interest of the Commission or to satisfy or educate the individual interest of each Commissioner. In addition, Commissioners were regularly updated on actions taken by the Board of Supervisors on items that affected water supply, water quality, groundwater recharge, flood control, drainage, reclaimed wastewater and other related issues.

FUTURE GOALS

The direction and goals of the Water Advisory Commission for 2001 have not yet been discussed by Commission members. Once again, one can ascertain from their actions over the past year that the Commission has a keen interest in promoting regional water resource management, water supply planning and monitoring. There is also a growing desire to solicit a greater involvement from the Water District managers from the Pajaro Valley and Santa Margarita areas at the Water Advisory Commission meetings. Until that discussion has been completed, the Commission will continue to evaluate important issues affecting the County's water resources, respond to requests by your Board and the public, and make timely recommendations on both policy and other appropriate matters.

Submitted by:

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Michael Cloud

Administrative Staff

Water Advisory Commission