

Kathleen Brennan-Hunter,
Conservation Program Manager
Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
747 Mendocino Avenue, Suite 100
Santa Roas, CA 95401-4850

Date: October 15, 2005

Re: Open Space District Acquisition Priorities Update; Resource Protection Easements

Dear Ms. Brennan-Hunter,

The Sonoma County Water Coalition (SCWC) includes 31 organizations with a combined membership of over 27,000 concerned citizens. We are grateful for the opportunity to provide acquisition priority suggestions to the Open Space District and to participate in the District's priority update process.

Our members are concerned that the water supply of Sonoma County is facing growing demands. In many areas, natural reserves of groundwater are in overdraft and are being withdrawn faster than they are replenished. Recharge zones are constantly threatened by the impervious surfaces created by ongoing development.

Furthermore, here in our county, the Sonoma County Water Agency, on August 11, 2003, announced to its local cities and other water contractors that their water rights are 'not secure'. In addition, the 2005 Sonoma County Grand Jury Report advised local governments to prepare detailed plans for water supplies and to place greater dependence upon groundwater.

There are efforts to protect the future of California's water supplies. The state of California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has identified groundwater recharge zones throughout the State. In a recent visit, DWR Chief Hydrologist Carl Hauge suggested groundwater recharge zones could have signage similar to that found at drinking water reservoirs. We support this idea. Furthermore, we encourage prompt protection of groundwater recharge areas in all ways possible.

Groundwater recharge lands in Sonoma County are, in many cases, congruent with urban separators and critical wildlife habitat.

We therefore urge you to give groundwater recharge zones priority in your updated acquisition plan.

Our hope is that, once identified, these special lands might be considered for the purchase of site-specific "resource protection easements." We urge the district to consider the possibility of committing funding for the acquisition of such easements. By earmarking funds for such resource protection easements, the District can make a significant difference to the security of our water supply here in Sonoma County.

These areas of our County were mapped by the California Department of Water Resources in the 1970's. The Sonoma County Water Coalition would be willing to provide any assistance you might require to include these areas in your mapping.

Thank you for considering our input on this matter,

Sincerely,

Stephen Fuller-Rowell
Sonoma County Water Coalition