

Handout 2.1-D
4/11/19

Melissa Stone

From: Erin Gil <erin@grassfarminc.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2019 3:09 PM
To: Board of Directors
Cc: John Varela; Debbie Barncord; Rose Shumard
Subject: Open Space Credit
Attachments: 2019 OSC letter Valley Water.docx

Dear Board Members of Valley Water ~

As a grower since 1969 in Santa Clara County, working within the parameters of plant material needs as well as improvements in genetic modification for drought tolerance, pest and disease resilience, water remains of utmost importance to support a healthy community.

One of the most unknown aspect of well water use within the Agricultural community is the variability of costs due to well efficiencies. Growers pay energy costs between \$165 to \$185 per acre foot to draw and pressurize typical systems. This cost continues to rise.

We believe the benefits of open working lands with diminishing the need for flood control in San Jose, recharging ground waters and other ecosystem benefits that the opportunity costs of applying the Open Space Credit leave Santa Clara County residents benefiting greatly from the presence of Agriculture.

We hope you feel the same way.

Sincerely,

Erin Gil
President
Grass Farm

NOTED
APR 11 2019



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Dear Valley Water Board of Directors:

Once again Valley Water (the Santa Clara Valley Water District) is looking to raise the cost of water to ranchers and growers with in the county. As costs and inflation threaten agricultures abilities to remain viable in today's marketplace -- it is important that this discussion include the following points:

1. Open space and working lands play a key role in ground water recharge. Not all ground water is imported (as evidenced by the current rainfall year).
2. Growers & Ranchers use private water delivery systems, Ag wells, and pay for the energy and infrastructure that delivers water to produce crops, products and food that relieves urban citizens from having to spend their time to feed themselves as well as improve the quality of their lives. This is not a cost-free service.
3. Water rate discrepancies between Santa Clara Counties northern and southern rate payers is a false issue. Past agreements between water systems, Hetch-hetchy, State and Federal Deliveries have unique variable costs associated with each. Areas NOT serviced by higher cost sources (District 1) should not be forced to take on the burden of past water delivery choices (District 7). Valley Water Board Members ought to explain this additional cost to its constituents.
4. Growers and ranchers are using the most effective means to improve yields and conserve water available today. Agriculture continues to produce more crop per drop, year after year. Americas low food costs are a benefit to all citizens, especially those that have low incomes. Agriculture is a Life Enhancing Industry without substitution. America's security remains contained within Food Safety.
5. Raising water rates to agricultural users only increases the pressure for urbanized development by putting growers out of business, thus increasing flood control costs for Santa Clara County.
6. Conservation alone can NOT solve California's water problems. It is of vital importance that water infrastructure play a role in urban planning. Valley Water, by not participating in planning for Santa Clara Counties cities and rural areas, participates in 'depleting' water resources for open working lands by creating greater demand and scarcity of available waters. This action degrades the quality of life for Santa Clara County.
7. By not acknowledging the ecosystem benefits from open working lands, as well as the life enhancements of agriculture to Santa Clara's populations and environment, Valley Water, sets up agriculture to be falsely blamed as a 'water waster,' putting valuable community assets at risk. Open space and working lands, together, provide a wildlife corridor to protect local and endangered species. Working lands also provide a great resource for carbon sequestration and buffer for urban pollution sources. Applied water, in the production of crops, is delivered to the end consumers breakfast, lunch and dinner table with the balance returned to the environment.

Where costs are important to cover... Benefits are too often overlooked, underestimated or not covered at all in the decision-making process, once gone -- gone forever... Protect Open Space Credits.

Sincerely,

Erin Gil
Second Generation Coyote Valley Grower
Grass Farm & Grass Farm's Garden Accents