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August 27, 2000

Scott Hennessy, Chair [Sent by FAX: 831-755-5487]
Monterey County Planning Commission
County Courthouse, 240 Church Street
Salinas, CA 93901

RE: Development Restrictions in North Monterey County Hydrogeologic Study Area Meeting of August 20, 2000; Agenda Item #7

Dear Mr. Hennessy and Commission Members:

LandWatch Monterey County strongly urges your Commission to recommend that the Board of Supervisors adopt an interim ordinance temporarily suspending certain types of development in the North Monterey County Hydrogeologic Study Area. You will discuss this matter as Agenda Item #7 at your August 30, 2000 meeting.

The specific ordinance that the staff has presented for your review is very modest in the restrictions it recommends, because it suggests that all subdivisions currently "in the process" should be exempted from its terms. The staff notes that 488 land use applications are now pending, for developments proposed within the North Monterey County Hydrogeologic Study Area. Of these 488 applications, 54 are subdivision applications. If these 54 subdivision applications were all approved, a total of 588 new lots would be created.

While we agree that it probably makes sense to permit other development applications to proceed through the process (if filed before August 9, 2000), we do not think it would be unfair to suspend approval of all new subdivisions located in the North Monterey County Hydrogeologic Study Area, effective immediately. In short, we propose a stronger ordinance than the ordinance presented to you in your agenda packet. If a subdivision is currently pending, approval should be temporarily suspended for the eighteen-month period recommended by staff. No further new lots should be created, in the face of the current overdraft emergency.

The Planning Commission will certainly remember the action it took on July 12, 2000. On that date, the Commission voted unanimously to deny a 26-lot subdivision, in large part due to potentially significant cumulative water impacts in North County. Please note that the application that the Commission has already denied was filed prior to August 9, 2000. It does not make logical sense (if the Commission was right to deny the proposed 26-lot subdivision on July 12th, as we think it was) to allow other, similar subdivisions to proceed.

LandWatch believes you should consider modifying Section 16.75.030 B. 2, and Section 16.75.060 B, of the proposed ordinance. We believe that the ordinance should not exempt proposed subdivisions, and that no new lots should be created within the North Monterey County Hydrogeologic Study Area during the eighteen-month temporary suspension of development recommended by staff.

Thank you for taking our views into consideration as you review the staff recommendation. Naturally, LandWatch would prefer the modest approach recommended by staff, rather than no action, but we do believe that the Commission was correct in its decision on July 12, 2000, and that it is only fair that all proposed subdivisions be held to the standard that the Commission used in that case.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Patton", written in a cursive style.

Gary A. Patton, Executive Director
LandWatch Monterey County

cc: Lou Calcagno, Chair of the Board of Supervisors County Counsel