COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

PLANNING DEPARTMENT
701 OCEAN STREET, SUITE 310, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
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ALVIN JAMES, DIRECTOR

May 20,2003

Agenda: June 10,2003

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

STATUS REPORT ON THE CONTINUATION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND USES ON COAST DAIRIES RANCH

Dear Members of the Board:

On February 11, 2003, your Board directed Public Works and Planning to report back on this date with an update on the progress made towards the preservation of agricultural land uses on the Coast Dairies Ranch. As you may recall, the listing of Coho salmon and Steelhead trout under the Endangered Species Act has led to National Marine Fisheries Service and California Department of Fish and Game actions to protect and enhance the fish populations. These actions have resulted in the curtailment of all water diversions from the streams flowing through the ranch. Future water diversions will be predicated upon the acquisition of water rights to divert water during periods of excess flows into off-stream water storage reservoirs. Included in this report is the progress made towards finding grant funding for professional assistance to develop site specific documents required to prove project feasibility and to secure all applicable permits, including the acquisition of water rights.

Three meetings have occurred since the previous report to your Board. Meeting attendees have included representatives from the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Fish and Game, State Water Resource Control Board's Division of Water Rights, National Marine Fisheries Service, Bureau of Land Management, Trust for Public Lands (TPL), Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau, Save Our Agricultural Lands, Friends of the North Coast, Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, agricultural growers, Third District Office and County staff, as well as others. A site tour was held on April 28, 2003 to familiarize agency staff and other stakeholders with existing and potential reservoir sites.

Through collaborative efforts with the agencies, good progress has been made towards defining the project descriptions. Based on preliminary environmental reports prepared by TPL's consultant, there is justification for pursuing a "Northern Project that would divert water from Molino Creek and Ferrari Creek, and a "Southern Project" that would divert water from Liddell Creek and Yellow Bank Creek.

For the purpose of securing grant funding the overall project has been organized into two different phases. Phase I is the feasibility portion to determine if off-stream water storage for agricultural irrigation water will provide a feasible, long-term solution for the preservation of agricultural land uses on the Coast Dairies Ranch. Phase II of the project involves,the design, engineering, permitting and construction of the water diversions, pipelines and off-stream storage ponds: Potential sources of grant funding have been identified and several promising leads for Phase I funding are being pursued, including the submittal of a pre-proposal application to the California Department of Conservation last March.

It is therefore recommended that the Board of Supervisors take the following actions:

1. Accept this status report; and

2. Direct Public Works and Planning to continue to pursue potential grant funding needed to contract for professional services related to obtaining water rights and the development of off-stream water storage reservoirs for the Coast Dairies Ranch and return with a status report on or before October 21, 2003.

Sincerely,

ALVIN D. JAMES
Planning Director

THOMAS L. BOLICH
Director of Public Works

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RECOMMENDED:

SUSAN A. MAURIELLO
County Administrative Officer

cc: Planning Department
Public Works Department