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September 30, 2019

Debbie Arnold, Chair
Board of Supervisors
County of San Luis Obispo
1055 Monterey Street, Suite D430
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

Dear Chair Arnold:

In July, the California State Board of Food and Agriculture held its first listening session to receive input from the Central Coast region to inform the effort to develop a California Water Resiliency Portfolio. The meeting was held in San Luis Obispo on Tuesday, July 5th. While participation was limited due to several factors, there was a robust discussion by those in attendance that focused almost exclusively on implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Since that time, there have been additional meetings and correspondence received sharing a concern about the limited outreach and engagement of irrigated agriculture which has substantial capital investments in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin and the future business viability of the region.

One of the fundamental values of constructing the Sustainable Ground Water Management Act of 2014 (SGMA) was that it must be locally driven and that engagement of all stakeholders would be foundational to developing a governance structure and Groundwater Sustainable Plans (GSPs). These governance structures and GSPs could lead to successful implementation of the law while maintaining strong local economies, safe drinking water and quality of life that depends upon our environment. Yours is a challenging job to oversee the development of a plan of such long-lasting impact. It will determine the future of your county -- its very economic and environmental well-being.

Because the State Board has heard from so many people from the agricultural community in the Paso Robles area sharing their desire to be fully engaged and helpful in exploring all potential solutions to restore balance to the aquifer, we felt it important to reach out to you. We are sensitive to the tremendous challenge you – and other counties – face as regions focus on long-term resiliency in the face of population growth and



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climate change. Relying almost exclusively on groundwater pumping cutbacks is one solution, and every agriculturalist who has addressed the board acknowledges demand reductions must be a part of the plan, but not the sole option. Given the extraordinary agri-culinary tourism industry the county has built upon the foundation of wine grape growing and irrigated agriculture we are hopeful that the innovative, progressive farmers and ranchers in your community will have plentiful opportunities to engage in a transparent process to develop solutions.

Sincerely,



Don J. Cameron

cc: Karen Ross, California Department of Food and Agriculture