

Julie Dachtler

From: Lee Smith <lsmith@libertypistachio.com>
Sent: Friday, October 3, 2025 11:39 AM
To: Clerkoftheboard
Subject: Subject: Comments on the Proposed Extension of the Well Moratorium

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Dear Supervisors,

I'm writing to share some concerns regarding the proposed extension of the well moratorium which would halt the issuance of well permits within the designated focus areas.

I fully recognize the County's intention to better understand the impacts of converting pastureland into irrigated farmland on groundwater resources. That's a worthwhile effort, and I support the YSGA's efforts toward a scientifically supported approach. However, the ordinance, as currently written, applies a broad halt on all new well permits—even in cases where the proposed wells have no connection to the conversion of pasture to irrigated agriculture.

In its current form, the ordinance will penalize growers who are acting responsibly and simply trying to maintain or sustain their existing operations. While I appreciate that a hardship exemption exists, the process seems poorly defined, uncertain and will likely be too slow to be much help when a well goes dry or fails during a critical part of the season.

Those acres already under cultivation in many cases have been so for generations. Adding, upgrading or replacing a well on farmland already under cultivation has a very low likelihood of changing the net extraction of groundwater. In many cases replacing or adding newer wells will have the positive impact of conversion to best available technology and extraction from groundwater strata that's less likely to impact domestic wells.

I would urge the County to consider narrowing the scope of the moratorium so it applies specifically to new well permits intended for irrigating previously unirrigated land. This would still allow farmers to replace aging wells, support existing crops, or continue seasonal operations without being swept up in restrictions meant to address a different concern.

This more targeted approach could allow the County to meet its objectives while also avoiding unnecessary disruptions to agricultural operations that aren't contributing to the groundwater concerns being studied.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Lee Smith

Liberty Orchards

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