



Mendocino County Farm Bureau

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Affiliated with the California Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation

August 30, 2021

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
501 Low Gap Road, Room 1010
Ukiah, CA 95482

Via Email: bos@mendocinocounty.org

RE: 6b) Discussion and Possible Action Including Direction to Staff to Draft an Urgency Ordinance Regarding the Prohibition of Water Hauling from One Source to Another Except for Health and Human Safety or Permitted Businesses

Dear Chair Gjerde and Board Members,

The Mendocino County Farm Bureau (MCFB) is a non-governmental, non-profit, voluntary membership, advocacy group whose purpose is to protect and promote agricultural interests throughout the county and to find solutions to the problems facing agricultural businesses and the rural community. MCFB would like to submit the following comments for agenda item 6B.

With the current low water year that the county and state are experiencing, there are genuine needs for the ability to purchase and haul water to supplement low supplies. For example, the State Water Resources Control Board has curtailed the ability to divert water in the Russian River watershed. The upper watershed in Mendocino County was subject to these curtailments and in the weeks following the regulatory action, MCFB spoke with several individuals that were considering having to haul water to supplement livestock (mostly non-commercial with a few pet goats, horses, etc.) as the health and human safety exemption from the state has yet to be clarified as to any exemption allocation allowances for livestock. From the farming side, there has also been a need to haul water to supplement young vines planted within the last few years that do not have established root zones like older vineyards.

In other areas of the county, such as the Navarro River watershed, there are also examples of commercial livestock operations running out of water in early August that are now having to haul in water from sources in the Ukiah Valley to sustain their stock.

Agriculture is always working with what Mother Nature provides and adapts accordingly. Due to the limited water availability in 2021, difficult decisions have been made to reduce herd sizes, purchase additional feed resources, thin crops or eliminate irrigation all together. However, for the reasons stated above, MCFB requests that the Board clarify the overall intent of this item so that additional burdens are not placed on legitimate agricultural operations.

Some specific requests for clarification:

- What is meant by one source to another?
 - Is this a watershed boundary?
 - If trucked water is limited to sources within a specific watershed, has there been any analysis to know what legitimate water sources are available within the various county watersheds for continued trucking use? (See Navarro example above)
- What is a permitted business intended to be defined as?
 - How would a resident with “pet” livestock qualify?
 - What documentation would a commercial livestock operation need to present to prove that they are a permitted business?
- How would action by the county drive an increase in demand to other municipal water sources that are currently available for trucking?

MCFB understands that there is frustration with reports of water theft, water hauling, etc. However, MCFB encourages the consideration of the comments and questions above during the discussion of this agenda item in the hopes of not creating unintentional consequences for those residents of the county who are being forced to look for alternative water sources for their own households, livestock or legal businesses. If there are any questions related to these comments, please feel free to contact the Mendocino County Farm Bureau office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George Hollister".

George Hollister
President