



# Leavens Ranches LLC

A Family Farming Company

November 29, 2023

Board of Directors  
Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency  
Ventura County Government Center  
800 S Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

RE: Transitioning Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency (FCGMA) to an Independent Staff

Dear FCGMA Directors:

As it states on the FCGMA website, "The FCGMA is an independent special district, separate from the County of Ventura or any city government."

Since its formation in 1982, the FCGMA has worked diligently to manage the Basin and we, as users of that water, are eternally grateful for the efforts of all the Directors, previous staff, and local stakeholders that have served on committees. We know all served with the good intention of safeguarding our Basin's precious water resources.

We are keenly aware of those lifts by recent Boards, staff, and committees and do understand the difficulties of navigating increasingly complex and formal issues in the post SGMA era. We want to compliment the current staff, including Kim Loeb, for their contributions and accomplishments in assisting FCGMA and our County Groundwater Agency during this evolving time.

As the business of water resource management became more institutionalized, it is clear the Board increasingly relied on the opinions of multitasking County staff in making their decisions and remaining ahead or on track with SGMA. To maintain that separation, we as stakeholders see a need to move away from the current staff structure. We hope to see future assessment dollars used to maintain an independent staff, in support of projects, and not have increased assessments funding litigation.

Leavens Ranches supports Director Borchard's effort to propose a transition from the current FCGMA staffing model using contracted County employee-based staff to one with an independent staff comprised of water, science, public administration, and finance professionals. In this scenario we envision an office of experienced, knowledgeable, and innovative professionals who embrace stakeholder engagement and

are passionate about developing mutually beneficial water sustainability solutions. Ideally this staff is not beholden to their county employer and can balance the delicate demands of constituents –residents, farmers, cities, or businesses, with efficient and effective water resource management. In supporting this proposal, the Board's focus could shift to developing a staffing plan that builds a successful team they could rely on to meet the tasks required of them for many years to come. We feel doing so would be a tremendous step forward in ensuring FCGMA's future as valuable to all.

As stakeholders in Las Posas Valley Basin (LPVB) and MWC members in OPV we were dismayed that despite outreach to the Board and GMA staff at many junctures over the five-year long LPVB trial that the final position of the FCGMA was to appeal the July 10 ruling of the Superior Court. Ultimately that stay request was rejected by both the trial and appellate courts, so we are moving forward. The GMA position that implementation should be stayed was extremely surprising in that the decision supported FCGMA's appointment as Watermaster, and proposed new staffing structures, such as Mr. Borchard proposes to tackle. We are still unsure how the tables changed from support to opposition to what was written in the ruling.

In developing the proposed rule for the now-in-place judgment, many Las Posas Basin Landowners and their representatives rolled up their sleeves and spent countless hours developing move ahead solutions for the Basin. While not perfect- and done with trial deadlines looming that would not budge- the proposed solutions remained flexible and as equitable as possible and were completed with an immediate move ahead framework.

When looking at the outcomes from a difficult and expensive LPVB trial and with another looming in the largest and most complex of FCGMA's basins, this should be clear evidence that the landscape for water resource management has become more complex, fluid, and in some cases fractured, since the Board's pre SGMA days. As proof -we see with the recent variance complexities, deadlines, and of course the litigation component. It is apparent that Board meeting topics are very high stakes and more in-depth than in the past and with that as the new norm, resultant demands on staff and the Board have increased dramatically.

We look forward to hearing what is considered regarding FCGMA staffing in greater detail at and after the proposed Special Meeting of the FCGMA Board of Directors on December 1st. Thank you for your time and consideration of the topics raised in this letter and support of Director Borchard's look-ahead proposals.

Sincerely yours and on behalf of the entire Leavens Team,

J. Link Leavens  
President, CEO  
Leavens Ranches LLC



November 27, 2023

Board of Directors  
Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency  
Ventura County Government Center  
800 S Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

FCGMA Directors,

First, let me thank you for your work in the past, present and future protecting our community's ground water resources.

As a former board member of the Berylwood Heights Water Mutual, I am aware of the complicated issues facing our community with regards to our water resources and understand how pivotal your role will be in arriving at our mutual goal of sustainability. The issues are complicated and have and will take an enormous amount of your time developing a comprehensive and fair strategy for the future.

As a landowner/stakeholder in this process, I look forward to the next stage of planning and implementation and hope we can put behind us the crippling legal costs incurred by members of our community.

Out of the adjudication, the courts concurred with a majority of the community and have designated the FCGMA as our Las Posas Basin Watermaster. I strongly feel it is most important for FCGMA to employ full-time in-house staff to fulfil its role as our Watermaster. Developing a strategy to better manage our water resources simply put is, a full-time job and is too important to out-source.

Should you follow this recommendation for an in-house staff, please to encourage them to continued stakeholder engagement and identify compromises that will keep us from the spiral of litigation and its high cost of time and money. I believe this is what the community most hopes for from your leadership.

Thank you again for your work.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Jones", is written over the typed name.

Steve Jones, President  
Green Fuse Botanicals, LLC



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Mauricio E. Guardado, Jr.

Legal Counsel  
David D. Boyer

November 30, 2023

Board of Directors  
Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency  
Ventura County Government Center  
800 S Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

RE: Discussion of Future Staffing Needs of the Agency

Dear FCGMA Directors:

This letter is to convey United Water Conservation District's support of Director David Borchard's request for the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency (FCGMA) Board to agendaize a discussion which would consider the development of an effective staffing plan that would accomplish the appropriate and chartered goals and objectives of the FCGMA as a whole.

As it states on the FCGMA website, "The FCGMA is an independent special district, ***separate from the County of Ventura or any city government.***" Developing a comprehensive, independent staffing plan that builds a successful team of experienced, knowledgeable, and innovative hydrologist and hydrogeologist, staff members who encourage stakeholder engagement and involvement; who are passionate about developing mutually beneficial solutions to the challenges of reaching water sustainability and who are dedicated to balancing the delicate demands of constituents – be they residents, farmers, cities, or businesses, with efficient and effective water resource management would be a tremendous step forward in ensuring FCGMA's future value to all.

To that end, I look forward to the FCGMA board discussion and action items in greater detail during the special meeting.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. E. Guardado", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Mauricio Guardado  
General Manager, United Water Conservation District

Trusted life source for generations



December 1, 2023

**VIA EMAIL**

Board of Directors  
Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009-1600

**SUBJECT: Future Staffing Needs of the Agency**

Dear FCGMA Board of Directors,

We have reviewed the staff report and the many letters that accompanied the agenda packet for this meeting today, and we are concerned. We are concerned that this is an effort to delay implementation of the Groundwater Sustainability Plans. The process of ending FCGMA's relationship with the County and recruiting entirely new staff could take several years. We are concerned that FCGMA is not currently adequately staffed to address the regulatory and legal challenges ahead. Restructuring the staffing at this time will only exacerbate this issue. FCGMA and the pumpers have benefited from the relationship between the Agency and County. We are concerned about the costs associated with ending this relationship. If pumping fees are going to increase, we would like those fees to be utilized efficiently and towards compliance with SGMA not on the administrative costs associated with restructuring the staffing for the Agency. While we acknowledge and share some of the concerns expressed by the Board and in the letters attached to the Agenda, we encourage the Board to explore avenues within the existing relationship with the County to address these concerns.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Tribo  
Ventura Water Assistant General Manager of Water Resources

CC Via Email: Gina Dorrington, Ventura Water General Manager