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December 3, 2018

Paul Hood, Executive Officer  
Santa Barbara County Local Agency Formation Commission  
105 East Anapamu Street, Room 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

**Re: LAFCO Hearing December 6, 2018, Business Item #3: LOCSD Request for Time Extension to Implement Proposition 218 Assessment to Fund Wastewater Treatment Facilities, etc.**

**Dear Mr. Hood,**

Heal the Ocean would like to address the request by Los Olivos Community Service District for a one-year extension on funding a wastewater collection system as it agreed to do as a condition of LAFCO's approval of the LOCSD formation in January 2018.

One of the conditions LAFCO adopted during the formation of LOCSD:

*The District if formed shall cease to exist if an assessment to fund a wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal system or systems to serve the community is not approved one year of the effective date...*

LOCSD's effective date of formation was January 2018, and without a deadline extension the District would cease to exist within the next two months.

LOCSD is now asking for the year extension in order to implement a Proposition 218 Assessment to fund wastewater treatment facilities for the area, including CEQA and other planning analysis, assessment study and necessary election

Heal the Ocean realizes the time it takes to run a Proposition 218 Assessment, CEQA and other planning analyses. These necessary steps are one big reason it took us 15 years to bring the Rincon septic-to-sewer project to fruition. It has been recognized that the formation of the LOCSD is one step toward remedying the septic pollution problems in Los Olivos, but we must say that this long, circuitous (and expensive) route to solving the issue seems unfortunate to us, and we're not sure that one year will be long enough for all the necessary permitting steps.

Nevertheless, there are many moving parts to solve the overall wastewater problem in the Santa Ynez Valley, which is a problematic area for septic systems in many areas besides Los Olivos. Ballard has groundwater pollution, so does Janin Acres, and so do other communities in the Valley, with the result being the continued degradation of the Santa Ynez Uplands Groundwater

Basin. The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors declared the Santa Ynez Valley "problematic" many years ago, and in the Los Olivos Special Problems Area designation was established in 1974 - *that is forty-four (44) years ago!*

To get a handle on this continued degradation of the groundwater basin by septic systems, there is now talk of the Solvang Wastewater Plant becoming a regional plant for the troubled communities. There is also talk of the Chumash wastewater recycling facility being able to handle the wastewater needs of nearby communities. So while these issues are being discussed, there is no harm in waiting another year for LOCSD to pull together all the necessary steps it needs to go through.

However - and this is a Big However - we ask that LAFCO require a progress report by October 2019 at a publicly noticed LAFCO meeting, **and we also ask that there not be another extension beyond April 5, 2020.**

Heal the Ocean has spent the past 18 years attempting to remedy the pressing issue of septic tanks polluting the groundwater of the Santa Ynez Valley. This has involved town halls, public education campaigns, co-funded studies, assistance with various LAFCO processes etc. Now, here we are nearly two decades later, and we are still facing the same issues.

Even though the formation of the LOCSD in January 2018 represents a positive step, the entire time the LOCSD has been finding their feet—setting up administrative functions, securing dry period financing from the County, establishing protocols for board meetings—the septic tanks continue leaching into the aquifers. In requesting the one-year extension in September 2018, LOCSD's interim general manager Doug Pike states:

*With the limited funding we currently have, including paying back certain costs to the County, the budget does not have sufficient funding to do the necessary Engineering Report to establish a new assessment in conformance with Prop 218. The assessment process will no doubt require a few iterations to get to the point of a final solution to wastewater issues in Los Olivos.*

"A few iterations" alone involves much time, HTO thinks, beyond a year. Opportunities for funding the construction of a wastewater plant have already been lost, and further delay means more lost opportunity - and worse, raises the specter of regulation, which will take away much of the local autonomy that the LOCSD has sought to establish. The extended timeline is an inevitable reality of forming a new District, but please let this be the only extension granted.

Sincerely,



Hillary Hauser, Executive Director



Andrew Juliano, Policy Analyst

cc: John Robertson, Executive Officer, Central Coast Water Board  
Harvey Packard, Supervising Engineer, Central Coast Water Board