

## Outreach Memo

Dec. 17, 2020

The politics of water has long been a divider of communities in the West, and now here in San Luis Obispo County. Lines are drawn, factions are formed, and the actual facts are often oversimplified and/or lost in a myriad of complexities – all to the detriment of sustainability, economic vitality and community solidarity.

Striking a balance in creating a water sustainability solution for the Paso Robles Water Basin is critical.

A recent [CalPoly economic impact study](#) looks at the economics of this balance. It says that if broad water cutbacks, as laid out in the Paso Robles Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan (PRGSP) are the only solution, that it will cause economic harm to the community.

There is now an opportunity to unite our community around a few common-sense facts, and work together to implement creative and smart solutions to achieve sustainability while also ensuring a healthy future for our economy and quality of life in the North County.

In the destructive economic wake of COVID-19, balancing the economic and environmental health is now more critical than ever.

Beyond government and health care, the top two industries in North County are irrigated agriculture and hospitality. As we've experienced in 2020, these economic drivers are dependent upon each other so, now more than ever, it's critical to look at the long-term impact of water.

Thanks to the CalPoly study, for the first time we can clearly see – via hard data – how vital irrigated agriculture is to tourism, but also to retail, professional services, transportation and a host of additional “down ticket” industry sectors.

According to the study, if alternative sustainability solutions aren't developed and the water cutbacks go into effect, Paso Robles' economy alone could lose \$458 million annually, and erase 3,351 fulltime jobs.

Additionally, the water cuts could wipe out a quarter of Paso's wine industry, the CalPoly study shows. The blanket cuts could also squeeze out other non-

grape crops, severely impacting Paso's diverse agriculture economy and jeopardize the viability of family farms.

There are many alternative solutions to consider, and farmers who irrigate not only want sustainability, they know all too well that concessions must be made to achieve it, like exploring additional fallowing and further curbing use. Seeking alternative water sources is vital.

Thankfully, the PRGSP is not set in stone. It can be amended to include more economically sensible solutions that also attain sustainability. But it is going to take the help of the entire community and leaders like you to get it done.

We invite you to review the CalPoly study and we welcome a conversation to discuss how together we can move forward to strike the balance we need to ensure sustainability, economic vitality and community solidarity.

Please contact Stacie Jacob or Mike Dawson to set-up a time to further discuss.