

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR SHEILA KUEHL

June 16, 2015

The Santa Monica Mountains North Area consists of approximately 32 square miles of unincorporated territory located west of the City of Los Angeles and north of the Coastal Zone boundary. This largely undeveloped territory is located within the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and contains many natural resources, such as scenic hillside areas, watersheds, and natural habitats that support diverse biological communities. Since May 2014, the Department of Regional Planning has received 32 ministerial applications to establish vineyards in the Santa Monica Mountains North Area that could entail the development of 495 acres of land. This trend raises several concerns.

The primary concern is water supply. The State of California recently entered its fourth year of drought. Last year, the State adopted laws that will begin to regulate groundwater supplies. Earlier this year, mandatory water restrictions were imposed for the first time in the State's history. In this unprecedented era, the development of dozens of vineyards – most using wells to draw upon groundwater supplies – should be carefully considered. It is imperative that the Santa Monica Mountains avoid the

MOTION

SOLIS _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

KUEHL _____

KNABE _____

ANTONOVICH _____

problems that have plagued the Paso Robles region along the Central Coast, where the water level dropped 70 feet in 16 years, leaving many wells dry.¹

Water quality is another important concern. Vineyards could increase runoff, erosion, and sedimentation. Pesticides and fertilizers can infiltrate waterways during rain events. Many chemical pesticides are composed of copper, zinc, and arsenic, which are potentially toxic to algae and other aquatic life forms.² The cumulative impact of dozens of vineyards could be devastating to the area's fragile watersheds. Although best management practices could mitigate these impacts, such practices are not currently required by the County Zoning Code and the County is unable to impose conditions on ministerial applications.

Lastly, there are concerns related to the fundamental issue of land use compatibility. The guiding principle of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan, adopted by this Board in 2000, is to let the land dictate the type and intensity of use. Vineyards require the removal of natural vegetation, and in many cases, extensive grading due to the presence of steep slopes. The establishment of dozens of vineyards will undoubtedly result in visual impacts that will transform the character of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area. In addition, the Countywide General Plan Update, approved by this Board earlier this year, will greatly expand Significant Ecological Areas within the Santa Monica Mountains North Area when it is adopted. The natural vegetation removal and grading associated with vineyards will cause habitat fragmentation and hinder wildlife movement within these expanded Significant Ecological Areas.

¹ <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/calif-residents-say-wineries-gulping-down-areas-only-water-source/>

² <http://www.environment.ucla.edu/perch/resources/files/vinyardbmpssmmnra2012a.pdf> (p. 28)

The Department of Regional Planning should initiate a zoning study to address concerns about vineyards in the Santa Monica Mountains North Area, including but not limited to those mentioned in this motion. The study should consider possible amendments to the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Community Standards District, a zoning overlay adopted by this Board in 2002 that helps implement the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan and addresses special problems which are unique to this geographic area. These amendments could include additional permitting requirements, development standards, performance standards such as best management practices, and/or prohibition in some areas.

To prevent incompatible development, it is necessary to institute an urgency ordinance temporarily prohibiting the establishment or expansion of vineyards, either as a primary or accessory use, in the Santa Monica Mountains North Area until the zoning study is completed and additional regulations are considered by this Board.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the Director of the Department of Regional Planning to initiate a zoning study for all properties in the Santa Monica Mountains North Area;
2. Adopt the attached interim urgency ordinance temporarily prohibiting the establishment or expansion of vineyards, either as a primary or accessory use, in the Santa Monica Mountains North Area, as defined in the ordinance, declaring the urgency thereof and that this ordinance shall take immediate effect; and
3. Direct the Acting Executive Officer / Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to set a public hearing to consider an extension of this urgency ordinance on July 28,

2015 at 9:30 a.m.

S: MCC/Vineyard Motion