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Monday, July 29, 2024

TO: Santa Barbara LAFCO  
105 E. Anapamu Street  
Santa Barbara CA 93101

**RE: AUGUST 1, 2024, Agenda Information Item #1 LOCS D update re wastewater treatment project**

Dear Mr. Prater and LAFCO Commissioners:

The LAFCO Commission will be receiving during its August 1, 2024 meeting an information update from the Los Olivos Community District (LOCS D) on its progress toward providing a funding mechanism for the building and operation of a wastewater treatment facility to collect, treat, and dispose of sewage and wastewater in Los Olivos.

Heal the Ocean has been following LOCS D meetings to gauge progress since the district was formed in 2018 with this express purpose – to build a wastewater treatment system that will enable Los Olivos to abandon septic systems that are contaminating the Santa Ynez groundwater basin. In its efforts to verify that the elevated nitrates in its groundwater basin is indeed (or not) from septic system contamination, Santa Barbara Environmental Health Services (EHS) has provided funding for monitoring wells. The testing from those monitoring wells, installed by GSI Water Solutions (GSI), has been ongoing.

During the most recent LOCS D meeting, the GSI consultant verified that elevated nitrate levels were, in fact, from septic systems – and not nearby agricultural operations.

In April 2025 LAFCO will be considering yet another extension to LOCS D to get to a successful Proposition 218 vote that would pay for the building of a wastewater system, and Heal the Ocean knows the difficulty of getting to a successful vote (through our 15 years of successfully spearheading the Rincon Septic-to-Sewer project). We are concerned about the “hybrid” approach being talked about by LOCS D, with some Advanced Treatment Septic Systems to be included within District boundaries. This may serve to deter essential support by all property owners within the District boundaries as those properties to be served by Advanced Treatment Septic Systems can avoid necessary treatment upgrades by voting against a community wastewater system.

More importantly, we are highly concerned with the GSI results, which reveal that water quality in the groundwater basin continues to be degraded. Although HTO has offered assistance with finding the funding, or knowledge, or expertise from package Wastewater

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Treatment Plant contractors, LOCSD has not accepted our help. That is of no matter to us. What does matter to us is the continued degradation of the groundwater basin by Los Olivos septic systems, as described to LOCSD by GSI consultants. This is not acceptable. It is time to stop testing and debating, and get to work on building a wastewater treatment facility to protect water quality

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hillary Hauser". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Hillary Hauser, Executive Director

CC: Lars Seifert, Director Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services