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# HALF MOON BAY REVIEW

AND PESCADERO PEBBLE

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## It's all about water

*By Emily Wilson-Half Moon Bay Review--  
Photo by mark Jordan*



Jack Olsen of the Farm Bureau was one of the Ag Summit organizers.

It was a big moment for San Mateo County farmers: the county's first-ever agricultural summit.

The main topics hit were off-stream reservoirs, a label for products grown in San Mateo County, and possibly tax credits for open space organizations to help keep land in agriculture.

"I think it was a very positive experience and I think everyone learned a lot," said Jack Olsen, the executive director of the San Mateo County Farm Bureau, one of the sponsors of the summit.

"People are looking towards trying to resolve water issues and this allowed for an unveiling of a lot of work that has been going on for a long time."

Tim Frahm, the director of the Agricultural Water Quality Program for the farm bureau, said he has been working on a grant to streamline getting permits for off-stream water storage.

"Farmers don't believe it's fish or farms," he said. "Farmers want to be part of the solution. We need agencies to believe and encourage and embrace this message."

The need to balance water for fish and water for farms came up again and again during the panel discussion.

"There's no dispute that fish need water and that crops need water," said John Ambrose of the National Marine Fisheries Service. "It seems kind of ridiculous to even say that. Can we balance? Can we conserve both? Both are important and both are misunderstood."

Ambrose also said that off-stream storage is where all the groups - farmers, environmentalists and regulatory agencies - should focus their efforts.

"It's imperative we sustain and initiate this dialogue," Ambrose said. "We must start focusing on fixing the problem and moving away from finger-pointing."



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**Question of the Week**

**Do you think you are getting your moneys worth from our cable TV on the Coastside?**

Yes

No

I don't think so since they removed the music stations I don't have cable TV

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Audrey Rust, president of Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), addressed the sometimes-tense relationship between the three groups in her presentation in the panel on keeping land in agricultural production.

"Sometimes it seems we are not always operating collaboratively with you," Rust said. "It's easier to fight with friends and family than somebody else."

"But we all have common interests here."

Rust pointed out that POST buys land from corporations and people selling the land for development.

"We're not taking farmers' lands," she said. "We want to make farmland available to farmers."

Rust said that part of POST's mission is to protect natural resources, as well as to provide opportunities for recreation.

"We would never have money to protect land from concrete and asphalt without those recreational opportunities," Rust said. "To ignore that really will set us up for no success."

San Mateo County Supervisor Rich Gordon said that if POST leases the land out to farmers, they get taxed on it.

One thing he wants to look at is working with legislators to see if there can be tax breaks if land is leased out on a long-term basis to farmers.

Another thing that came out of the summit was Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson's commitment to coming up with a label to identify products as being grown in the county by the end of the year.

Coming up with possible solutions and highlighting work that has been done already made the summit a success, Gordon said.

"I was pleased with attendance, the diversity of people there, the level of dialogue and conversation," he said.

"It gives me hope we can work together on some of these problems."

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