



SACRAMENTO COUNTY FARM BUREAU

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July 27, 2011

Roberta MacGlashan, Chair
Sacramento County Board of Supervisor
700 H Street, Suite 2450
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: County General Plan update – July 27, 2011 Board Hearing

Dear Chair MacGlashan and members of the Board;

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Sacramento County Farm Bureau, we submit the following comments relative to the General Plan update and public hearing on July 27, 2011.

Sacramento County's gross farm gate sales is valued at \$358 million, when employment, transportation, marketing, and other related services are considered that number triples and agriculture is a \$1.2 billion economic engine for the County. With such doom and gloom in the state's current economy, there has been one bright spot that has gone unnoticed, the large, diverse and productive agricultural industry. This geographic area provides the best climate that allows for a long growing season; producing abundant, affordable, high quality food that is unparalleled to any other part of the world. This County contributes to a \$38 billion agricultural industry for California. It should be the top priority of Sacramento County to ensure agricultural land is protected without any reservations. For these reasons Farm Bureau supports the policy changes identified below.

Farm Bureau is suggesting adding language that is in 'bold' text and deleting language that is 'strikethrough'.

Ag Element (July 27, 2011, Draft Agricultural Element, Attachment B):

- AG-5; page 9 Amend- AG-5. Projects resulting in the conversion of more than fifty (50) acres of farmland shall be mitigated within Sacramento County, based on a 1:1 ratio, for the loss of the following farmland categories through the specific planning process or individual project entitlement requests to provide in-kind protection (must be an equal or higher farmland category), such as easements for agricultural purposes:
- prime, statewide importance, unique and local importance farmlands located outside the USB;

To Represent and Promote Agriculture in Sacramento County

- prime farmland located inside the USB; **(prime farmland shall be determined based on the 2008 Farmland Map from the Department of Conservation).**
- lands with intensive agricultural investments, **both inside and outside of the USB.**

However, if farmland inside the Urban Services Boundary is approved for non-agricultural purposes as part of the specific plan process or individual project entitlement, and that land is also required to provide mitigation pursuant to a Sacramento County approved Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), then the Board of Supervisors may consider the mitigation land provided in accordance with the HCP as meeting the requirements of this section including land outside of Sacramento County.

Note: This policy is tied to the 2008 Important Farmland map from the Department of Conservation as reference when determining prime farmland located within the USB. Using a specific map will alleviate the ‘sliding’ of farmland category(s) when irrigation is taken off of land.

Public Facilities Element (*July 27, 2011, Draft Public Facilities Element, Attachment A*):

To provide consistency in the draft 2030 General Plan, we strongly encourage the Board of Supervisors to consider amending policies in the public facilities element to recognize agriculture as an important part of Sacramento County.

Farm Bureau supports the development of renewable energy on public and private lands that is cost-effective to rate payers. Conversely, we remain concerned that many of these projects are being placed on highly productive agricultural land that converts it from production agriculture to an energy facility. Farm Bureau urges the County to proactively maintain an appropriate balance of energy facilities on lands that limits agricultural use.

Solar Electric and Other Renewable Energy Facilities; page 35 -

The General Plan should define ‘large scale utility-sized solar electricity facilities’ for the clarity of this policy.

PF-77.1; page 36 Add separate bullet point: – **Energy facilities supplying electricity to utility companies proposed for exclusively agricultural zoning designations or lands used for agricultural mitigation should require a conditional use permit to mitigate the potential negative impacts on neighboring farming operations.**

PF-77.1; page 37 Amend ‘Farmlands’: Farmlands. Site on farmlands of the lowest quality, e.g. land classified by the Department of Conservation as “other land” or “grazing land”, then consider farmlands of local, unique or statewide importance. Avoid high quality farmlands, especially land classified by the Department of Conservation as prime **and lands under active Williamson Act contracts.**

PF-78; page 37 Amend:- New solar and other renewable energy facilities should be designed and developed so as to minimize impacts to sensitive biological resources such as

oak woodlands and vernal pools, cultural resources (including designated historic landscapes), or ~~prime~~ farmlands as defined by the California Department of Conservation. Nearby farm operations shall not be negatively affected by renewable energy facilities, per the policies of the Right-to-Farm Ordinance and the Agricultural Element, and shown on page 21 of the General Plan's Open Space Element.

Electric Transmission Facility Siting and Design; page 40 Amend: - Intent: Policies throughout this Plan commit the County to preserve its important resources such as wetlands habitat, ~~prime soils that support intensive farming~~, **agricultural land** and aggregate deposits suitable for surface mining. New rights-of-way located in these areas may infringe upon existing land -uses. The following policies provide guidelines that minimize land use conflicts with high voltage transmission power lines. Undergrounding portions of the line may be a desirable mitigation measure in some instances, but these policies do not require undergrounding to achieve policy compliance. The cost of undergrounding transmission and sub-transmission lines and who bears that cost is determined by the utility provider.

PF-92; page 92 Amend: - **Careful consideration shall be taken when transmission lines cross farmland. Transmission lines should be placed to avoid cropping restrictions (ie. orchards), limiting farming practices and/or within intensive agricultural investments. Preferred alternatives such as routing lines along the periphery of farmland shall be considered.** ~~The crossing of prime or statewide importance farmland with transmission lines should be avoided whenever possible. In those cases when crossing farmland in these categories is unavoidable routing of the lines along the periphery of the site is the preferred alternative.~~

Open Space Element (July 27, 2011, Draft Open Space Element, Attachment C)

Remove Figure 1D. This map clearly defines land use designation for specific areas without consent of affected landowners.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,



Charlotte Mitchell,
Executive Director

cc. Leighann Moffitt, Planning and Community Development Dept.