

20th Anniversary!

Spring / Summer 2019

Farmland Working Group

Striving to protect food, families & farmland. Since 1999.

Saving Farmland, Growing Cities

A Regional Approach to Farmland Conservation

By Katie Patterson, California state policy manager

Saving the land that sustains us isn't feasible without agriculture, and agriculture takes a whole lot of collaboration to make possible. It's the successes and challenges that we experience together as planners, government officials, farmers, non-profits, and citizens that move the needle in our ability to save the land that sustains us.

It is for this very reason that AFT targeted its Saving Farmland, Growing Cities <<http://www.farmland.org/initiatives/saving-farmland-growing-cities>> initiative toward Stanislaus County 30 years ago. With a focus on policies and planning that reduce the conversion of California's agricultural land and promote smart growth, AFT partnered with Stanislaus County officials to deliver an update of the Agricultural Element of the county's General Plan. Additionally, AFT convened the Stanislaus Farmland Working Group among local partners and officials to address farmland protection issues. As part of our San Joaquin Land and Water Strategy <<http://www.farmland.org/initiatives/california-farmers-combat-climate-change>>

in Stanislaus County, AFT continues to track the effectiveness of local farmland protection policies by partnering with the county planning commission and other local officials.

Through these experiences and learnings, AFT believes that we'll be able to collaboratively achieve even more successful and promising local farmland conservation programs in California. Sharing our insights and knowledge is key to understanding that effective conservation of farmland is possible. There are a variety of ways to accomplish it, if we summon the political will to do so.

A Bounty Almost Lost

Stanislaus County is one of the most bountiful agricultural regions in the world. Ranked fifth in the state in agricultural production in 2017, the agriculture industry produced \$3.6 billion worth of economic impact in the county. With extensive irrigated water fed by the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and San Joaquin rivers, the county's agricultural water source is considered among the cleanest, least expensive, and most reliable irrigation sources in the valley.

Continued page 2



Our Mission: To preserve the agricultural foundation of our region and promote smart growth in our urban communities through education, outreach and action.

Cities in Stanislaus County have faced unprecedented growth over the last half century. Between 2000 and 2010, 87 percent of the land that was converted to urban uses was high-quality irrigated farmland. Since this farmland makes up only 45 percent of the county's undeveloped land, the high rate of conversion suggests that this important resource is being consumed at a disproportionately greater rate than other land in the county. The reason for this is that most development occurs immediately around the cities, and most cities are located in the midst of high-quality farmland.

Crafting Progressive Farmland Protection Policies

Over the last three decades, citizens in Stanislaus County have made consistent strides to balance urban growth with agricultural protection policies. As a result, the county has some of the most progressive farmland protection policies anywhere in the San Joaquin Valley. The communities in the county grew their farmland protection policies around effective tools that included the use of growth initiatives, farmland mitigation, and the development of local policies and programs.

In Modesto, residents took their local planning decisions to the ballot, requiring public votes on sewer service expansion projects. Nearly 30 years later, citizens put forth a measure that required the public to vote on the rezoning of unincorporated agricultural land to urban uses.

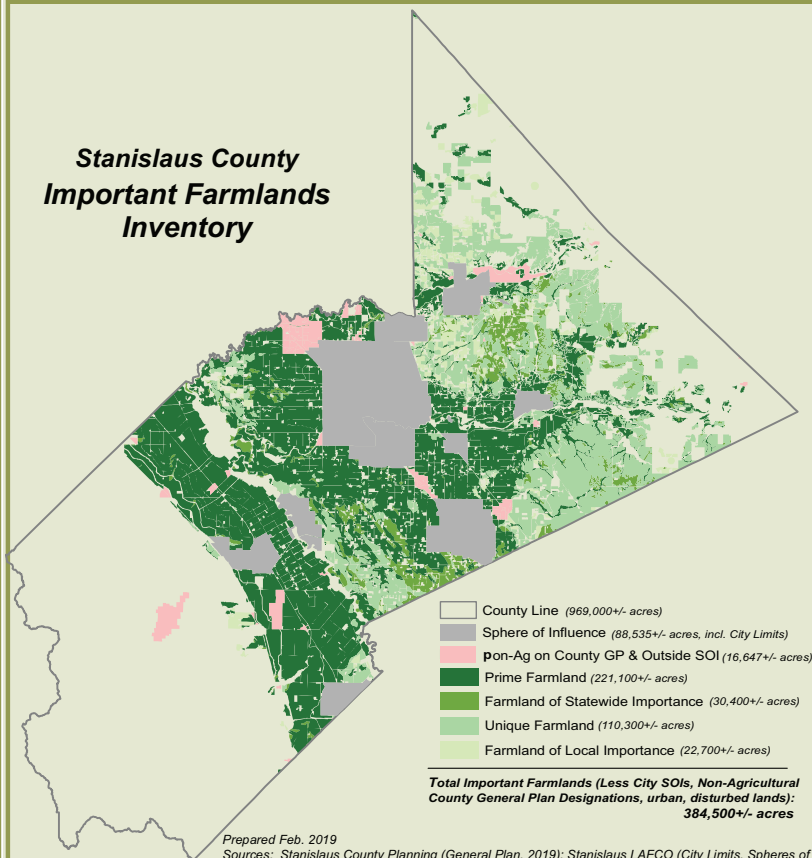
At the county level, in 2007, the Agricultural Element, which had been in place since 1992, was updated in the General Plan. The new element included a Farmland Mitigation Program compelling developers to mitigate the loss of farmland by acquiring agricultural easements at one acre for every acre that their projects convert or by paying fees to enable land trusts to do so. Although this was challenged by the Building Industry Association, the State Supreme Court upheld the element. This led the way for the City of Hughson to adopt the most aggressive farmland mitigation program in the San Joaquin Valley requiring the preservation of two acres of farmland for every one acre developed...

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Read more

<https://www.farmland.org/our-work/where-we-work/california/posts/saving-farmland-growing-cities-a-regional-approach-to-farmland-conservation?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=df7d7de5-f546-422b-b894-75758399ec6c>

Stanislaus County Important Farmlands Inventory



Non-Ag General Plan Acreages for Unincorporated Areas (Outside City SOIs)

Crows Landing	92
Crows Landing Industrial Business Park	1,561
Del Rio	587
Denair	1,051
Diablo Grande	3,023
East Oakdale	2,449
Grayson	101
Hickman	129
Keyes	1,014
Knights Ferry	99
La Grange	86
Salida	4,961
Valley Home	16
Westley (incl I-5 area)	493
Other Scattered Non-Ag Parcels	985
Total:	16,647



WE ARE WATCHING...

Stanislaus LAFCO

www.stanislauslafco.org

Farmland protection requirements (mitigation) upon urban development is starting to show action at the city level. Modesto, Patterson and Riverbank may have projects that produce in-lieu fees for farmland protection at a rate of 1 to 1 acre based on LAFCO policy.

Recently, based on a change of policy request by Developer Keith Schneider of Keystone Properties in Patterson, fees charged to developers for farmland mitigation can be collected upon each building permit. This change makes it easier and more efficient for the cost of farmland mitigation to be bore by the eventual home owner. Fees are collected by each city then transferred to a qualified land trust in order to place Agricultural Conservation Easements (ACE's) on farmland elsewhere in the county.

Stanislaus County was recently featured as a case study in the Strategic Growth Council's white paper, found here:

http://sgc.ca.gov/resources/docs/20181004-Creating_Sustainable_Communities_and_Landscapes.pdf

Stanislaus County

www.stancounty.com

Housing projects are moving forward in the unincorporated community of Keyes. Because these are older applications and do not have the same requirements as cities under LAFCO control, no farmland protection mitigation has been required. Housing projects outside previously approved county planned areas, are required to get countywide voter approval before a housing development can proceed.

City of Modesto

www.modestogov.com

Kiernan Business Park: There are a number of new residential and commercial developments occurring in Kiernan Business Park. These include an Alzheimer's care facility, a senior housing facility, a Residence Inn, a medical office and two new apartment complexes totaling over 300 dwelling units. There are pending entitlements for additional commercial development along Dale Road.

Apartments: In addition to the two apartment complexes in Kiernan Business Park, there are two other pending apartment projects located in the City, at Conant/Rumble and on Scenic Drive.

Vintage: The 45-acre vacant parcel located immediately north of Vintage Faire Mall is currently being developed with a mix of conventional

and small-lot single-family homes, totaling 227 dwellings.

Almond Grove: A tentative subdivision map was recently approved by the Planning Commission for 246 single-family homes on 51.4 acres located in the Fairview Specific Plan area, south of Hatch Road and east of Carpenter Road.

Woodglen: The developers of this area have submitted an application for their tentative map, which will provide for 368 small and conventional lot single family homes, and 165 apartment dwellings, in the adopted Woodglen Specific Plan area. The tentative map has not yet been scheduled for a Planning Commission hearing, but we anticipate it going to the Commission sometime in the next two months. This may be the first project from a city to produce farmland protection mitigation fees. Due to the amended LAFCO Policy on fees, funds are not likely to show until 2020.

Tivoli: City staff is working with property owners and their representatives to stage up the Tivoli area for development. This includes the construction of a new water well, the extension of sewer trunk lines, and the formation of a Community Facilities District that will pay for new streets and storm drainage for the area. We anticipate that the Tivoli area will be ready for development sometime later this year or next year.

Ceres

www.ceres.org

The Whitmore-Ranch annexation is scheduled for the April 24th LAFCO meeting (90 acres along E. Whitmore Ave between the existing City limits on Moore Road and the two schools).

Riverbank

www.riverbank.org

LAFCO may be receiving the Crossroads West application soon, they just had the 2nd reading of their rezoning ordinance. This is a major project due west of the current Crossroads Shopping Center at Oakdale and Claribel Roads. It is all prime farmland and farmland mitigation is expected for the housing portion of the project.

Newman

www.cityofnewman.com

LAFCO has an application on hold for the Northwest Newman Master Plan, awaiting a finalized City-County agreement. Housing construction was recently completed along Hills Ferry Road. They were part of a pre-2008 housing crash and do not have mitigation requirements.



Creating Sustainable Communities and Landscapes

Recommended practices and tools for local collaboration on climate-smart growth



CALIFORNIA
STRATEGIC
GROWTH
COUNCIL



OCTOBER 2018

PART II THE BENEFITS OF GROWTH MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

...The economic argument for smart growth is twofold. First, smart growth spurs the economic vitality of cities, and second, preserving agricultural and natural lands protects California's strong agricultural economy, contributes to local and regional food security, and supports ecosystem health.

Research has shown that vibrant, walkable downtown centers are engines for economic growth, and that demand is increasing for housing in walkable, transit-rich places in cities across California and throughout the country. A study by Smart Growth America found that directing growth to existing neighborhoods saves up to 38% on upfront costs for construction of new roads, sewers, water lines and other infrastructure and saves 10% on provision of services such as police, ambulance and fire service costs.

Additionally, this study found that on an average per-acre basis, smart growth development provides 10 times more tax revenue than conventional suburban development (Smart Growth America, 2013).

Conserving agricultural lands also has significant benefits. The State of California has some of the most productive agricultural lands in the world and is the country's largest producer and exporter of agricultural products.

“Directing growth to existing neighborhoods saves up to 38% on upfront costs for construction of new roads, sewers, water lines and other infrastructure and saves 10% on provision of services such as police, ambulance and fire service costs. “

Additionally, agriculture plays an important role in fueling local economies, providing jobs and improving local and regional food security. It is also a central piece of California's cultural heritage and way of life. CALAFCO and American Farmland Trust published a paper entitled “State of the Art on Agricultural Preservation” in February 2018 that provides more detail about the benefits of protecting farmland in California and outlines successful strategies for LAFCOs to do so.

Read more

http://sgc.ca.gov/resources/docs/20181004-Creating_Sustainable_Communities_and_Landscapes.pdf



Message from Founding Director Jeani Ferrari

Farmland Working Group is celebrating its 20th Anniversary!

On 7 May 1999, Jeani Ferrari, JoAnn DiGiovanni, Bill Reichle, Joyce Warner and Joel Hidahl signed the Initial Resolutions to become Farmland Working Group, Inc., a non-profit organization. Our mission statement is our action statement: To preserve the agricultural foundation of our region and promote smart growth in our urban communities through education, outreach and action.

The Farmland Working Group is committed to the promotion of responsible land use. The FWG Board and committee members are persistent voices at LAFCo, City Council and Boards of Supervisors meetings: we show up and speak out against poor land use decisions. Three former

Board members, Rudy Platzek, Vance Kennedy and Joel Hidahl are recognized leaders in addressing the importance of protecting our region's farmland, the most productive in the world. Board member Denny Jackman is a persistent and important voice in the long-term protection of farmland in our region.

Our best tool for educating and informing the public is our highly regarded newsletter. The Farmland Working Group newsletter brings timely information and call-to-action to its readers. All elected officials in Stanislaus County have received our newsletter since 1999. Our organization is a volunteer organization, it has no paid staff: please consider supporting our important work!

FWG Executive Board

Chair

Lori Wolf

Vice Chair

Timothy Parker

Treasurer

Audie Dahlgren

Secretary

Jeani Ferrari

Directors

Chance Carrico

Denny Jackman

Elizabeth Mullen

Ana Ringsted

Erica Stewart

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Thank You
To Our Sponsors

Sustaining Sponsors

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Garton Tractor

GRACEADA PARK

APRIL 20, 2019

10AM - 4PM

WE'LL BE BACK!



LOOK FOR FWG'S BOOTH

WE'LL BE

**CELEBRATING OUR
20TH ANNIVERSARY**

**AND PROMOTING
FARMLAND PRESERVATION
AND SMART GROWTH!**

A donation
has been made:

*In Memory of
Rudy Platzek*

by

Hope Hamilton

**Lowell and
Gwen Hillerman**

by

Nancy Hamaguchi

Tom Ferrari

by

Marcia Ferrari

Farmland Working Group

P. O. Box 948 Turlock, CA 95381 (209) 343-4174

www.farmlandworkinggroup.org



OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY!

GRACEADA PARK • APRIL 20, 2019 • 10AM - 4PM

Free to the public!



California Farmland Trust – Agricultural Conservation Easements

County	Nearest Town	Ag Prod.	Year Closed	# of Acres	County # Acres
Merced	Livingston	Sweet Potatoes	2011	211.90	10,331.27
	Santa Nella	Field crops	2014	178.00	
	Merced	Almonds	2011	243.99	
	Livingston	Almonds	2008	77.90	
	Delhi	Almonds	2002	44.00	
	Delhi	Almonds	2002	27.90	
	Delhi	Almonds	2006	40.70	
	Delhi	Almonds, peaches	2007	38.80	
	Delhi	Peaches	2007	38.46	
	Delhi	Almonds, peaches	2008	39.00	
	Delhi	Sweet potatoes	2002	25.50	
	Planada	Alfalfa and grain crops	2000	615.80	
	Planada	Cattle grazing	2000	391.00	
	Delhi	Almonds, walnuts	2005	263.00	
	Gustine	Alfalfa, field crops	2008	287.00	
	Livingston	Almonds	2015	100.5	
	Hilmar	Corn, alfalfa	2009	38.00	
	Cressey	Alfalfa, pasture grass	2006	89.00	
	Cressey	Corn, sudan, pasture mix	2006	382.9	
	Livingston	Almonds	2007	78.8	
	Los Banos	Grazing land	1999	6,983.00	
	Livingston	Almonds, olives	2008	62.52	
	Delhi	Peaches, almonds, walnuts	1999	73.60	
Stanislaus	Modesto	Almonds, walnuts	2009	155.83	306.94
	Modesto	Almonds, walnuts	2011	151.11	
San Joaquin	Linden	Walnuts, cherries	2010	48.78	2305.98
	Linden	Walnuts, cherries	2014	158.18	
	Linden	Walnuts, cherries	2011	174.24	
	Stockton	Corn, oats	2011	216.30	
	Lockeford	Walnuts	2012	253.75	
	Linden	Walnuts, cherries, peaches	2015	160.00	
	Lathrop	Onions, asparagus, hay	2006	927.90	
	Lathrop	Tomatoes, hay	2011	241.83	
	Stockton	Alfalfa, Tomatoes, Grain, Corn	2017	125.00	
Sacramento	Elk Grove	Corn and field crops	2013	166.20	709.08
	Elk Grove	Hay	2003	97.00	
	Howard Landing	Hay and grain	2007	225.00	
	Elk Grove	Vineyard	2003	220.88	