

FARMLAND WORKING GROUP

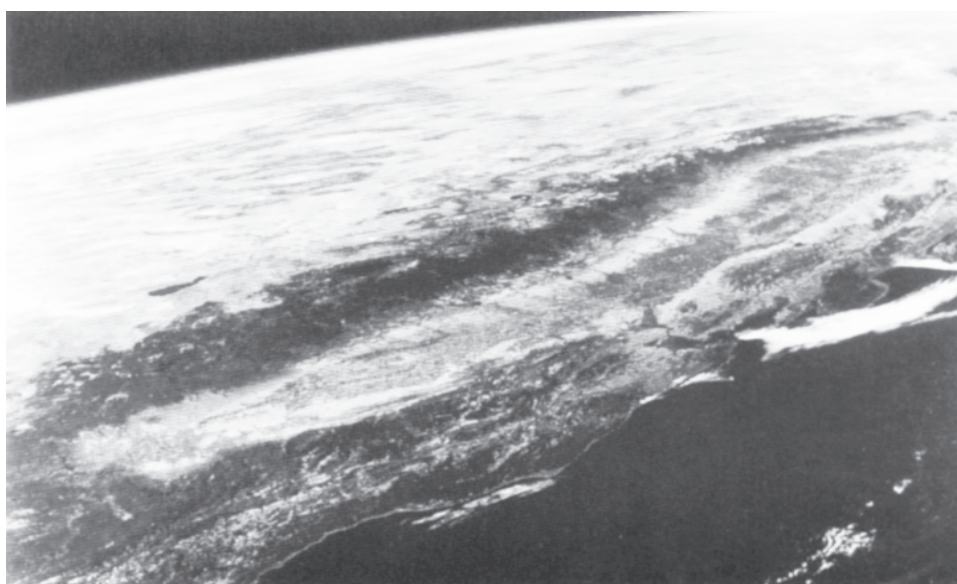
Winter 2010

STRIVING TO PROTECT FOOD, FAMILIES AND FARMLAND

FROM COURT DECISIONS TO THE BALLOT BOX 2010 WAS A GOOD YEAR FOR SMART GROWTH

Air, food, water, on these we must rely. For these we have no substitutes. Farmland Working Group is focused on securing our local food source. We were instrumental in the development and passage of Measure E (Stamp Out Sprawl) in Stanislaus County to direct urban housing development into cities.

Currently, we have an urban growth boundary general plan proposal before Modesto's Economic Development Committee. It calls for our local representatives to draw boundaries for the City of Modesto that restricts all urbanization, and commits those plans to a public vote. It would be a vote of self-determination for the City. Beyond a basic need for food is our need for a de-



pendable food source. The Central Valley of California has seven of the top ten agricultural counties in the United States. Stanislaus County is a dominant

continued on page 4

Court Reaffirms Farmland Mitigation Program— *Stanislaus County*

California's agricultural economy and culture deserve protection. That was the conclusion of the Ninth District Court of Appeal in a unanimous decision on Nov. 29. The Court upheld a Stanislaus County ordinance requiring developers to protect one acre of farmland for every acre they convert to large-scale residential use.

"This sweeping opinion provides strong support for local governments seeking to protect farmland and the agricultural economy and culture it supports. The ruling will give cities and counties throughout California the confidence they need to ensure that developers mitigate the impact of new development on farmland," commented Matthew Zinn who represented the County in the case.

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

In the News

by Josh Stevens

Local voters in the Nov. 2 California election were not necessarily “pro-growth” or “anti-growth” but rather seem to have embraced smart growth like never before. They expressed subtle but clear preferences for preserving open space while accepting compact development. Urban growth boundaries were a big hit, and several infill plans and projects were approved while anything that would have led to encroachment on greenfields or urban fringes was shot down.

Urban Growth Boundaries: Cloverdale, San Ramon, Petaluma, & Santa Rosa

Formerly the only city in Napa County without a UGB, Cloverdale embraced the trend and voted in its first UGB. Cloverdale is not known for growth pressures but the UGB may be a formal statement in favor of slow growth. Voters in San Ramon rejected a measure that would have expanded its existing UGB, and voters in Petaluma and Santa Rosa voted to extend the lifespan of their UGBs. Urban Growth Boundaries are sometimes considered tools to promote higher-density growth within defined urban areas. However, by virtue of their rural locations, and at least three of the four UGB measures that appeared on local ballots, appear to be intended to prevent Greenfield development rather than promote urban infill.

(Continued from page 1)

ing producer of food, yet barely one-third of the county's land is on the valley floor. The majority of Stanislaus County land is the coastal range and Sierra Nevada. Yet, from this relatively small amount of farmland comes some of the highest yield crop production in the world.

Reliable food production requires a secure water source. Irrigation districts such as Modesto, Oakdale and Turlock hold legal rights to water and operate systems of storage and delivery that are the envy of the world. A 2007 study of water recharge by the Modesto Irrigation District (MID) shows another link to the importance and relationship of farmland in our area. The study shows the importance of soils, rainfall and irrigation water for recharging our local aquifers. We use groundwater pumping for most of our drinking water.

Over the past thirty years, public surveys show ever-increasing support for local farmland protection.

Farmland Working Group is working with our local representatives that make up a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) planning a North County Corridor (NCC) to

better connect Freeway 99 to areas east. Public scoping meetings have been completed and a coalition of plans is available for review on the web: www.dot.ca.gov/dist10/environmental/projects/ncc99to120/map/nccalignment_oct

FWG promotes the upgrade and re-use of Kiernan Road for the majority of the NCC. The land north of the City of Modesto and east of the City of Riverbank are some of the best soils in the world. According to Dr. Vance Kennedy, retired geologist USGS, the high quality soils that border the Stanislaus, Tuolumne and San Joaquin Rivers took 3 ½ million years to form through a process of flood and recede, fold and recede. This farmland is also a major area of water recharge for the City of Modesto according to the 2007 MID study.

Each of our cities and their leaders have the information and technology to include the productive values of our soils and their recharge capabilities in their land-use choices and long-term plans. These values are just as important as transportation or public safety. Indeed, we have no choice, we must have food. Why not fresh, safe, local food?



WE ARE WATCHING...

City of Modesto

www.modestogov.com

Due to the appointment of Council member Burnside to replace Council member Olson, it is unknown what is in store for FWG's urban growth boundary presentation before the full Council. Each Council member has been briefed and a request has been made for a meeting with Council member Burnside regarding the ugb general plan amendment proposal. At the Council's Economic Development Committee meeting in October discussion suggested that the full Council would hear updates regarding Mayor Ridenour's efforts for regional land-use planning with the other Mayors in the County, in addition to FWG's proposal sometime soon.

City of Patterson

www.ci.patterson.ca.us

This city's new general plan appears destined for confrontation on many fronts. The transportation element is inadequate to identify funding sources for the gp's dramatic infrastructure requirements. The land-use element identifies sprawl into western areas known for significant wildlife species and thus impacts. Likely conflicts with state law SB375 may also curb the effectiveness of their general plan due to its massive increase of urbanization over prime farmland.

City of Riverbank

www.riverbank.org

Mayor Madueno and the new Council are sure to weigh in regarding the latest North County Corridor proposals. www.dot.ca.gov/dist10/environmental/projects/ncc99to120/map/nccalignment_oct2010.pdf Making best use with ongoing improvements with Kiernan Road is likely to secure a "most obvious choice" for serving their citizens access to Fwy 99.

City of Turlock

www.ci.turlock.ca.us

The city is moving ahead with an EIR for a draft General Plan including northwest and southeast expansion. The first scoping meeting will be in January. Compact growth and the protection of farmland have been points of concern at previous meetings. The Planning Commission recommended unanimously to not expand west of hwy 99. A new city council will have the opportunity to support Turlock's legacy of smart growth by directing development to the southeast and utilizing infill to accommodate growth.

Stanislaus County

www.co.stanislaus.ca.us

Public Works department has filed a multi-million dollar request and plans to CalTrans for interchange improvements at

Kiernan Road and Freeway 99. Funds need to be appropriated by January 2012 to qualify for state funding. Successfully securing these funds would make Kiernan Road a much more likely route for the ongoing North County Corridor. A four lane Kiernan expressway now extends from Fwy 99 to just beyond Dale Road. Right of way (ROW) for this section is already six lanes for future expansion. Plans and ROW for six lanes from Dale Road to McHenry are in action.

In January Terry Withrow replaces Jeff Grover as Supervisor in District 5 which includes the town of Salida and much of the county and citizens of Modesto west of Tully Road and north of the Tuolumne River.

High Speed Rail

www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov

The California High Speed Rail Authority voted to approve the 54-mile Fresno-to-Corcoran route as the first piece to be built for the state's newest rail system. The state will use nearly \$3 billion in stimulus and railroad funds from the federal government with matching funds from Proposition 1A. The environmental certification is expected to be completed in mid-2011. After that, the authority will seek bids for the construction, which must begin by September 2012 — a deadline included with the federal stimulus funds.

It was a very good year for **Farmland Protection and Smart Growth Advocacy**



Continuing concerns over sprawl have brought together several local and regional groups. This coalition is working together to address land-use practices in Stanislaus and Merced counties. Included are American Farmland Trust, Audubon Society, Citizens Advisory Committee on Recycling, Farmland Working Group, Modesto Peace/Life Center, Riverbank Watch, Sustainable Action Modesto, Stanislaus Taxpayers Assoc., Tuolumne River Trust, Valley Land Alliance, Westside PACE, Sierra Club—Yokuts Group.



From farmers markets, forums, high school scholarships, transportation planning and scoping meetings, Farmland Working Group was busy promoting smart growth and farmland protection. From letter writing to federal, state, and local public officials to personal meetings with our representatives, FWG was consistent and persistent in promoting our cause.

Our Advocacy Committee is engaging public officials to consider urban growth boundaries as one more tool to save our best farmlands. We expect local action in 2011.



Coalition members filled the chambers when Modesto's Economic Development Committee considered growth north of Kiernan Road.





Message from the Chair

It is important for us to recognize the increased awareness of local leaders regarding land-use issues. Not only has our building sector been slam dunked by a worldwide recession, we have at times led the nation for home foreclosures and unaffordable housing. The flip side of all that doom and gloom is that our base economy, agriculture, is strong and one of the few sectors that the banks are lending to.

Despite the contrasts between our urban and ag sectors, local leaders have grown a new level of respect for both sectors, one feeding the other, growing together as we work out of this lousy economy. Leaders who witnessed the booms and busts of our housing markets for more than three decades are keenly aware of great agricultural areas that reduced themselves to bedroom communities.

We have opportunities now that were not taken by many cities who are wall to wall with identities lacking variety and distinction. When bay area and Los Angeles farmlands ceased to produce there was always the great valley, the Great Central Valley of California.

Times change. Leaders change. Communities learn and representatives that promote our uniqueness and powerful ag/urban identity serve us well. As a massive food producing area (San Joaquin Valley has seven of the top ten ag producing counties in the U.S.) we also process food products for the world. World competitive companies hold huge investments and hire thousands of citizens who are supported by a network of stores, banks, hospitals,

schools, etc. No where on earth is there a more productive set of integrated services than here, our home. We have the land, water, farmers, industries, weather and people to get the job done. Our leaders get that. They are working to support our heritage and create a legacy of action to demonstrate how powerful futures are created.

The City of Modesto is working to get a form of an urban growth boundary (ugb) to its citizens, perhaps for the 2011 ballot.

Urban growth boundaries (ugb) are currently under discussion by local leaders. The City of Modesto is working to get a form of ugb to its citizens, perhaps for the 2011 ballot. Other leaders are talking about and considering how to promote strong economies while avoiding elimination of our best farmland. It will not be easy for them and they deserve your support. Encourage them. They will represent us well.

FWG Executive Board

Chair
Denny Jackman
Vice Chair
Chance Carrico
Treasurer
Audie Dahlgren
Secretary
Jeani Ferrari

Directors
Jojo Espiritu
Ron Freitas
Allen Gammon
E. Timothy Parker
Rudy Platzek
Ana Ringsted

Advisory Board

Tim Byrd
Deidre Kelsey
Vance Kennedy, PhD
Garrad Marsh
Al Sokolow, PhD
Diana Westmoreland
Pedroso

*Many thanks
to our sponsors for
underwriting
the cost of
FWG's newsletter:*

Sustaining Sponsor

*E. & J. Gallo
Winery*

Supporting Sponsors

Bank of America
Dave Wilson
Nursery
Farm Management,
Inc.
Garton Tractor

Thankful for Ag — *The Modesto Bee, Thanksgiving Day 2010*

...We think today also is the perfect occasion to acknowledge and appreciate agriculture, which remains the foundation of our economy here in the Northern San Joaquin Valley... no states approach California when it comes to variety.

Drive through Nebraska or Iowa, for instance, and you'll see miles and miles of corn. Drive through Idaho and you'll see

plenty of potatoes. But drive through our valley and you'll see a veritable cornucopia of just about everything. From almonds to walnuts, Holsteins to Herefords, chickens to turkeys, grapes to tomatoes, yams to strawberries, we are as diverse in what we grow as in who we are.

And for that, we are very, very thankful — and hope you are as well.



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

 www.farmlandworkinggroup.org



Affirm the importance of our work by becoming a member!
Farmland Protection and Smart Growth Advocacy is OUR MISSION!

almonds • apples • apricots • artichokes • asparagus • avocados • beans • bell peppers • berries •
broccoli • cabbage • cantaloupe • carrots • celery • cherries • corn • dates • eggplant • figs • garlic •
grapefruit • grapes • honey • honeydew • kiwi • lemons • lettuce • milk & cream • nectarines •
olives • onions • oranges • peas • peaches • pistachios • plums • spinach • strawberries • tomatoes •
walnuts • yams • zucchini • almonds • apples • apricots • artichokes • asparagus • avocados • beans •
bell peppers • berries • broccoli • cabbage • cantaloupe • carrots •
celery • cherries • corn • dates •
eggplant • figs •
garlic • grapefruit • grapes • honeydew • kiwi • lemons • lettuce • milk & cream •
nectarines • olives • onions • oranges • peas • peaches •
pistachios • plums • spinach • strawberries • tomatoes • walnuts • yams •
zucchini • almonds • apples • apricots • artichokes • asparagus • avocados • beans • bell
peppers • berries • broccoli • cabbage • cantaloupe • carrots • celery • cherries • corn • dates •
eggplant • figs • garlic • grapefruit • grapes • honey • honeydew • kiwi • lemons • lettuce • milk &
cream • nectarines • olives • onions • oranges • peas • peaches • pistachios • plums • spinach •
strawberries • tomatoes • walnuts • yams • zucchini • almonds • apples • apricots • artichokes •
asparagus • avocados • beans • bell peppers • berries • broccoli • cabbage • cantaloupe • carrots •

**Our New Year's wish is
for California to keep growing our food...**