

STRIVING TO PROTECT FOOD, FAMILIES AND FARMLAND

SAVING FARMLAND!

Trust's easements protecting our ag, but we need more

“There are no more valleys over the hill,” said John Ferrari, speaking to about 40 people standing among his peach, walnut and almond trees Thursday morning.

More precisely, there are no more valleys like this one over the hill. With its incredible ability to produce a cornucopia of foods, our valley is special. People like Ferrari's father — who cleared the land, set up irrigation, planted the fields and brought in modern farming techniques — helped create this valley's foremost industry, agriculture.



A generation later, people like John Ferrari and his wife, Jeani, are trying to keep the valley special by protecting that industry. That's why the Ferraris granted an agricultural easement in perpetuity to the Central Valley Farmland Trust. Now, their land cannot be used for anything but agriculture. As Turlock and Delhi grow closer together, there will always be a buffer of at least 263 acres, likely covered in fruit and nut trees.

Thursday's gathering in Delhi celebrated the granting of the Central Valley Farmland Trust's first agricultural easement, made possible with funds from the state and the Great Valley Center.

Jeani Ferrari pointed out the most critical element of the program — a payment of \$1 million. Farmers seldom have retirement plans. Their land is their pension. Easement payments give farmers an option other than selling to developers. It allows the next generation to continue farming.

The state has 55 such easements. We hope the Central Valley Farmland Trust can grant more.

The Modesto Bee June 18, 2005

As Turlock and Delhi grow closer together, there will always be a buffer of at least 263 acres, likely covered in fruit and nut trees.

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

Farmland Working Group Needs Your Support

FWG depends on contributions from individuals to keep our non-profit organization active and vital. Your support keeps us going! Please take a moment to join us and be part of the solution in protecting our agricultural heritage and promoting Smart Growth in our region.

Our active members meet monthly and regularly make presentations to service organizations, clubs and classrooms. For information contact Jeani Ferrari (209) 634-4495.

Yes, I want to support Farmland Working Group. **Here is my tax deductible contribution.**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

___ \$20 ___ \$50 ___ \$75 ___ \$100 _____ other

Mail to FWG, PO Box 2646 Turlock, CA 95381



Ceres High School

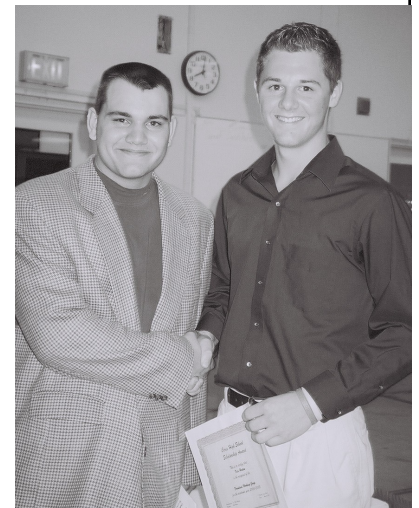
The FWG's High School Program was first introduced at Ceres High School in 1999. The late Joel Hidahl asked Karl Nielsen, head of the History Department, to consider showing our video, *A Vision and a Legacy*. Since that time, our video and curriculum have been available to all seniors at the school.

Joel Hidahl grew up on a farm in rural Ceres and graduated from Ceres High School in 1944. He followed in his family's footsteps and continued farming until his death in 2002. Joel was involved in many local organizations. He was a charter member of Farmland Working Group and served on the board until his death.

This year, Farmland Working Group presented our first scholarship to Kristophor Hooten, a senior at Ceres High School. Kristophor grew up in Ceres. He was awarded a \$200 scholarship for his poem, *Concrete Cold*, which describes the changing landscape. The Ceres High School connection to Farmland Working Group runs deep.

Presenting the award to Kristophor Hooten was Chance Carrico, Vice President, also a graduate of Ceres High School.

Joel Hidahl will be honored when Ceres' newest elementary school opens in late 2005 and bears his name, Joel Hidahl Elementary School.



In June, Karl Nielsen retired after 26 years at Ceres High School. Karl has been an advocate for the preservation of our farmland as well as the region's agricultural industry. Farmland Working Group wishes Karl a great retirement. ***To honor Karl's partnership with Farmland Working Group he has been awarded our first Lifetime Membership.***

**Letter from -
Bill Martin,
Executive Director
Central Valley
Farmland Trust**

In April, the Central Valley Farmland Trust opened its new office in Elk Grove, CA with two full time employees. As its new executive director, I have been on the move since.

Farmland mitigation is a critical issue throughout our four county region. A majority of many of the nation's food products are produced *right here* in the Great Central Valley of California. Rapidly increasing development pressure to pave over prime agricultural land has caught the attention of everyone who lives and works in this region.

CVFT exists because of the profound need to preserve farmland, a non-renewable resource of unprecedented economic and cultural value to the nation and the world.

As part of its farmland preservation activities CVFT is also engaged in the following important initiatives:

- Public outreach to educate farmland owners about Agricultural Conservation Easements (ACE).
- Working directly with landowners who have expressed an interest in placing an ACE on their property.
- Assisting the California Council of Land Trusts in developing policy that is relative to State and Federal funding for conservation easements.
- Ongoing stewardship and monitoring of existing easements.
- Initiating long-term fundraising strategies.

CVFT is a non-profit organization that relies on charitable donations to fund its farmland preservation activities. A Founding Donor fundraising program is currently underway. A minimum donation of \$500 allows you to become a CVFT Founding Donor with lifetime recognition. Please visit our website:

www.valleyfarmland.org

Or, contact us at (916) 687-3178.

**The Central Valley Farmland Trust
currently operates in a four county region which includes:
Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced counties.**

*This bumper sticker was seen on the car of the Mayor of Rohnert Park.
For your own bumper sticker call 526-5821*



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to our sponsors for
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A donation has been made:

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Farmland Working Group
P.O. Box 2646 Turlock, CA 95381
(209) 526-5821



Look for this sign along
Northbound Highway 99
between Delhi and Turlock!

THE Central Valley is the premier agricultural region in California. But it lags far behind central coastal areas in the accumulation of agricultural easements, an increasingly popular technique for protecting farmland through voluntary landowner action. The 18-county Central Valley has far fewer established local easement programs, participating landowners and agricultural acres under easement than a group of five coastal counties from Sonoma to the north to Santa Barbara to the south. The entire Central Valley in mid-2000 contained only 15% (13,100 acres) of the state's total 84,000 acres under agricultural easements, as compared with 70% (59,000 acres) for the coastal counties.



-Alvin D. Sokolow



President's Message

I was touched by the words of my husband, John, when he shared his passions for the land at the dedication of our conservation easement in June. Here are his remarks.

In the late 1920's, my grandfather and his family came from the Napa Valley to participate in the Delhi Land Settlement... My father was 15 at the time.

After two failed attempts to grow melons over two consecutive years, my grandfather retreated to the Napa Valley for good. My father had recognized opportunity here and decided to stay. He stood and watched as his family drove away. He was 16 at the time and determined to one day be a successful grower.

Our family's farming company purchased this farm in the late 1960's. It was largely non-irrigated sand

dunes at the time, with ancient stump grapes and acres of flourishing Bermuda grass. I was certain my father had lost his mind; he, however, knew he had found another challenge and was eager to begin.

Over a period of two years, the land was cleared, leveled and piped for flood irrigation and prepared for new trees. In 1970 most of it was planted to new peach orchards. Sadly, my father died in 1975 and never had the opportunity to see the farm in full throttle production. He would have been incredibly proud to know its production capability.

As the decades have passed, the farm has been re-configured several times but it continues to reflect my father's vision for this land. Really, only the commodity mix is different. Gravity water still flows onto the farm from the Turlock Irrigation District canal at the north boundary of the property from the distant Don Pedro Dam across the Tuolumne River in the Sierra Nevada foothills – another vision of early pioneers who came to this remarkable valley before my father.

It was easy for Jeani and me to decide to protect this land. We recognize that what occurred in Los Angeles years ago, and more recently in the Santa Clara Valley, is now happening in our valley. We also recognize that there are no more valleys over the hill.



Some folks maintain that we have too much good farmland and that we can afford to pave some of it.

I certainly hope that is the case because we paved 16,000 acres of it from 2000 to 2002 in San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties alone. Jeani and I are pleased that Humboldt Ranch will remain farmland forever.

We appreciate and thank the individuals and organizations that have helped us make this conservation easement possible.

- John Ferrari

Central Valley Farmland Trust

Excerpts from-

Farmland Mitigation Guidelines

Many Central Valley counties and cities are requiring mitigation for urban conversion of farmland through the use of agricultural conservation easements. Local governmental officials have asked the Central Valley Farmland Trust for input on such mitigation measures. The Central Valley Farmland Trust (CVFT) is governed by a farmer-oriented board of directors with experience in negotiating, holding, monitoring and enforcing agricultural easements. The CVFT currently operates in Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties.

The following guidelines are based on our experience working on conservation easements arising from mitigation requirements imposed by local agencies.

1. Who Should Hold The Easement?

Qualified easement holders include many governmental agencies and qualified non-profit land trusts like the CVFT. Easement holders are responsible for monitoring and enforcing the terms and conditions of the easement. Detailed baseline studies confirming the condition of the property at the time the easement is recorded and detailed annual monitoring reports must be maintained. The CVFT performs these functions through a combination of paid staff and trained volunteers who usually reside in the county where the easement is located and is familiar with the property subject to the easement. These functions take time and resources.

Many cities and counties prefer not to allocate their limited staff and other resources to these functions and prefer to have a qualified non-profit be the sole holder of the easement. Also, most of the farmers interested in agricultural easements prefer to have private, farm-oriented land trusts like the CVFT rather than governmental agencies hold the easement.

Therefore, we recommend that the non-governmental, agricultural land trust be the sole holder of the easement.

2. In Kind vs. In Lieu Fee

Some local agencies impose mitigation fees in lieu of requiring developers to place easements on specific properties. The fees can be used by a local land trust that has the expertise in locating important farmlands and knows farmers who are interested in easements. If a local agency decides to impose such fees, the fee amount should reflect current appraisals of conservation easements in the general area of the project, and such fee should be updated periodically to reflect current easement values. Also, the local agency should include in the fee an amount required to fund the annual monitoring and enforcement of the easements. We request 5% of the appraised value of the easement up front plus 1% of the sales of the property payable when the property is sold in the future to cover monitoring and enforcement. The fee should also include an amount to help cover the ongoing administrative costs of the land trust. Our last mitigation fee included 10% for this purpose.

**“I consider the San Joaquin Valley
the eighth wonder of the world,
something that can’t be duplicated”**

*Robert Gallo, Former Board Member
American Farmland Trust*

For local agencies that require developers to locate and place easements on property, they should encourage the developer to work with a local land trust like the CVFT in finding willing farmers in strategically important areas. The property should satisfy the guidelines the local land trust uses to select conservation easements (see attached guidelines). And the developer should be required to use the local land trust’s form easement agreement because the local land trust will likely become responsible for monitoring and enforcing the terms of the easement. Finally, the developer should also pay to the land trust an amount to finance the ongoing monitoring and enforcement of the easement and the ongoing administration of the land trust (see above for percentage of fee allocated for these purposes).

(guidelines 1 & 2 of 5)

The Central Valley Farmland Trust website is: www.valleyfarmland.org