



Winter 2009

STRIVING TO PROTECT FOOD, FAMILIES AND FARMLAND

Rethinking The North County Corridor

Modesto residents call upon StanCOG and CalTrans to “Make Kiernan Work.” Better use of limited transportation dollars are more logically spent completing long planned projects like the Kiernan Expressway, which is within Modesto’s urban area and will better serve its population.

Letter sent to Caltrans October 14, 2009
Re: NCC SR 108 Route Adoption, Draft EIR—
Preservation of agricultural land
by Janet Neal, Modesto, Ca

The Draft EIR Land Use Goals (Page 1096, Appendix F) are clear: “A goal stated in the Stanislaus County General Plan, and one common to all area plans, is the desire to conserve agricultural land to protect the county’s agricultural heritage and principle industry, and to preserve open space and scenic vistas where possible.” The Caltrans Environmental Handbook, Volume 4 states (p. 24): The intent of the California Department of Transportation is to avoid, whenever practical, locating public improvements within agricultural preserves or acquiring high quality agricultural land for transportation improvements.” The above land use goals above give priority to protecting the county’s unique ag lands which are its heritage and economic base. The 108 Route Adoption east of McHenry Avenue will cut through approximately 4600 acres of farmland and has the potential to influence the location and timing of growth, according to the draft EIR. Over 80% of the farmland in both Corridor A and Corridor B are under the Williamson Act.

Even worse, the NCC current plans are to connect the 108 East Route Adoption with a new expressway westward, from McHenry Avenue to SR 99 at the Hammett Interchange. That diagonal expressway would be carved through the middle of some of the best soils

left in Stanislaus County and would induce growth and development in the middle of prime ag land, which contradicts the above stated goals.

The farmland will be impacted less if the Kiernan-Claribel corridor is used as much as possible for the 108 route adoption and also as the expressway to connect to SR 99 at the Kiernan Interchange. Caltrans is currently widening Kiernan, SR 219, to 4 lanes. Appendix D, the Minimization and/or Mitigation Summary, states that the design guidelines are to “Minimize conversion of agricultural lands to roadway by placing the new expressway alignment along the routes of existing roads, where possible.”

Also, would it not be more fiscally responsible to continue to enlarge and improve the Kiernan-Claribel corridor than to promote a new, environmentally damaging expressway cutting diagonally through the agricultural heartland of northern Stanislaus County? Where the west end of the 108 adoption intersects with McHenry Avenue is critical. The western endpoint study area should be adjusted southward along McHenry Avenue, so the midpoint of the study area is at the intersection. Allowing the west end of the Route 108 Adoption to be north of the Kiernan/Claribel intersection with McHenry would set the stage for the diagonal expressway to be constructed toward the Hammett Interchange, severely disrupting the farmland. That disruption would then be used as a rationale for urbanizing all the land north from Kiernan/Claribel to the Stanislaus

See Janet B. Neal letter 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.



Congratulations Dave Wilson Nursery 2009 AG Hall of Fame Inductee

Dave Wilson Nursery was inducted into the Stanislaus County Ag Hall of Fame on November 12, 2009. Farmland Working Group board members, Denny Jackman, Chance Carrico, Jeani Ferrari and husband John and Ana Ringsted and husband



Roger, attended the celebration to honor Robert Woolley and Dave Wilson Nursery. Dave Wilson Nursery has sponsored Farmland Working Group's newsletter since its first edition in 2000. The tickets for the event were purchased for FWG by Farm Management, Inc.

Established in 1938, Dave Wilson Nursery has grown to become one of the largest growers of deciduous fruit, nut and shade trees in California for both commercial orchards and home gardens. In the late 1930s and 40s, Dave and his wife Isabel operated Empire Nursery, a garden center located east of Modesto, with Isabel's sister and her husband, Pearle and Walter Mann. The nursery became Dave Wilson Nursery when John Wynne, Dave's son-in-law, joined the company in the early 1940s.

Dave and John grew commercial orchard trees in a partnership until the company was incorporated in 1957. John became president of the company in 1962 and purchased

the present site of the nursery's headquarters, along the Tuolumne river east of Hickman in 1967. The nursery introduced the first tree fruit varieties developed by Floyd Zaiger in 1966 and are the primary propagator and exclusive licensor of Zaiger varieties with annual sales of over one million trees of patented varieties of rootstock.

In 1972, Dave Wilson branched out for the home garden wholesale market. Robert Woolley, in 1980, joined the nursery initially to help in the development of a unique, regionalized retail mail order catalog for home gardeners. After the mail order catalog was discontinued Robert became a field representative to commercial orchardists. Robert and his wife Jane purchased the business in 1989 after John Wynne passed away.

In 1997 the nursery purchased the 640-acre Red Rock Ranch in Hickman and added 240 acres adjacent to the nursery headquarters in 2004. The nursery employs 100 people year-round and approximately three hundred with peak seasonal employment. Dave Wilson Nursery grows over 3 million trees for both the commercial orchard and home garden, farms approximately 1,500 acres and maintains an office, sales yard and test orchard in Reedley, Ca.



John H. Pitman High School AG Studies ' students viewing
A Vision and a Legacy video. — November 2009

Janet B. Neal letter fom page 1

River. The result would be few farms and little open space left in Northern Stanislaus County.

The Draft EIR admits that the construction of the new Route 108 "could likely contribute to cumulative losses of active farmlands in Stanislaus County." The impact of the construction of of a new expressway on farmland should be addressed now rather than waiting several years until funding is available for the new route.

Riverbank's Best and Brightest Join FWG Board of Directors



Jojo Espiritu

Jojo grew up in San Diego where his father was stationed for most of his career in the Navy. After his father's retirement, the family moved to the Bay Area where he spent his high school and college years, eventually graduating with a Business Degree from Santa Clara.

As with most people growing up in the Bay Area, Riverbank then was as foreign a place as the Sahara is now. Trips to Yosemite, Muir Woods, Mendocino, Lake Tahoe with stopovers in Sacramento were in the offing as the years went by.... but Riverbank remained that mysterious nowhere place. Career as an Information Technology specialist, working for various Bay Area corporations also kept him away from the place he now calls home.

Jojo is now married and finds himself in the sleepy little town of Riverbank. This is where the story begins for his involvement and work with the *Farmland Working Group*. His serendipitous path to the Farmland Working Group started innocently enough through his involvement with Riverbank's General Plan Update. He and several other passionate residents got involved and formed a grass roots organization to protect the environment and more importantly, preserve the rural and agricultural roots of the Central Valley. Central to this cause was wording in the Riverbank General Plan that would preserve at a minimum 1 acre of farmland for each acre developed.

Jojo and his group organized neighborhood meetings, attended City Council Meetings to plead their case and even took a short detour to work on the landmark Measure E campaign. Unfortunately, all went for naught, as the Riverbank City Council through a 4-1 vote in April of this year, chose to omit specific language for farmland mitigation in Riverbank's General Plan.

Jojo thought his career in farmland preservation would be at an end. But all ends well as the Farmland Working Group came calling. He will now devote his time and energy in making it a world class organization.



Allen Gammon

Allen grew up in the Midwest. While working on his high school year book Allen developed skills in photography and soon landed job as a "stringer" photographer at *The Kansas City Star* newspaper.

Allen began pre-med courses at the University of Kansas. After entering medical school Allen was selected to participate in the exchange program between the University of the Philippines and Kansas University. He met his future wife, Annie, in Manila where she was a medical school classmate. After returning home, Allen sent for Annie who he then married.

After graduation from medical school in 1969, Allen traveled with Annie to Panama where Allen completed an internship. Allen then completed a two year pediatric residency at Harbor General Hospital in Torrance, Ca. before moving to Baltimore, Md. where he earned a Masters in Public Health at Johns Hopkins.

Drafted into the Army, Allen served two years working as a pediatrician at Nato Military Headquarters in Mons, Belgium. Daughter Annette and son David were born in Belgium. After service in the Army, the four Gammons returned to California. Allen completed a three year residency in Ophthalmology followed by fellowship training in pediatric ophthalmology in Washington, DC, New York City and London.

Emory University recruited Allen for a teaching position. Six years later, the Gammons traveled to Saudi Arabia where Allen taught and worked for one year. In 1987, the Gammons returned to California. Allen then began private practice in Modesto.

From extensive travels, Allen observed the importance of food and effective cultivation of farm land. The local loss of rich farmland to sprawl spurred Allen to get involved. A first step was participation in efforts to pass Measure E in Stanislaus County. During this process, Allen met Jeani Ferrari and Denny Jackman, founders of Farmland Working Group.



WE ARE WATCHING...

Stanislaus County

www.co.stanislaus.ca.us

While the Board of Supervisors election to replace Supervisor Jeff Grover is nearly a year away, concerns about smart growth and protecting irreplaceable farmlands will be at the top of the list for any responsible candidate.

A CalTrans public review process was completed in November for the eastern portion of a proposed North County Corridor. The CalTrans segment extends from McHenry Avenue to a connection to Hwy 120 east of Oakdale. The McHenry interchange is of critical importance to rural residence that are west of McHenry and north of Kiernan Avenue.

For decades, Kiernan Avenue was designated and expected to be the primary east-west connector between Fwy 99 and the cities of Riverbank and Oakdale. StanCOG has since recommended alternative routes farther north of Kiernan, which has caused those residences to call upon StanCOG and CalTrans to "Make Kiernan Work."

Many of the residents say that they moved to the rural setting to avoid such urban uses as freeways and expressways. They say that better use of limited transportation dollars are more logically spent completing long planned projects like a Kiernan Expressway which will be

closer and used more by the large Modesto population, too.

City of Modesto

www.modestogov.com

Modesto expansion advisory vote results:

Measure A; No 60.05%
Yes 39.95%

Measure B; No 64.70%
Yes 35.30%

Measure C; No 61.66%
Yes 38.34%

Measure D; No 63.66%
Yes 36.34%

Measure E; No 69.78%
Yes 30.22%

Despite the failure of all advisory growth expansion measures on the November ballot, a planning meeting for those expansions continued with a public workshop held by the City of Modesto Community Development Department. Though these meetings are designed to discuss issues of plan and design, policy questions became the hot topic.

Some of the audience asked why the City was moving forward with such planning when over 60% of the voters rejected all of the measures. Brent Sinclair, the department head, told the audience that despite the advisory elections his department is charged with continuing the planning process based on the City General Plan.

Another issue in need of clarity is the position of the City re-

garding farmland mitigation and policies designed to avoid urban conversion of our best surrounding farmland soils. While farmland mitigation puts a cost to convert farmland, it was said that policies need to be in place to require analysis of soil qualities with steps designed to protect them, such as urban limits. It was pointed out that the land north of the City is of the highest quality and a major contributor to recharging groundwater used by the City.

City of Livingston

www.livingstoncity.com

A Superior Court Judge on November 30, 2009 rejected the City of Livingston's approval of their 2025 General Plan Update. Excerpts from the court documents indicate a problem for many Central Valley cities that fail to provide proper review under California Environmental Quality Act laws.

The City failed to analyze all potential reasonable mitigation measures regarding prime farmland or make a finding of infeasibility, thus the statement of overriding considerations is flawed.

...and

The City's reliance on an unsupported population growth figure to support a statement of overriding considerations as to the numerous unmitigated impacts is unreasonable and appears to be a random leap from "evidence to conclusions."



Message from the Chair

The North County Corridor is one of three areas designated by the Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) for improving roadway connectivity between east and west in the north part of the county. The others are the South County Corridor, proposed between the Patterson/I-5 area and Turlock/99 area, and the Central Corridor we know as Hwy 132.

Since the early 1990s, Kiernan Avenue had been designated the main east/west connector in the north county region and planned as an expressway. In 2008, StanCOG chose to jump on the Salida Plan bandwagon for yet another distinct east/west connection. With population projections based on studies by developers of the Salida Plan, StanCOG advanced "the need" for multiple lanes and an all-new North County Corridor. Though Kiernan Avenue was planned to be a Class B Expressway for the past two decades, development after development was allowed to ignore curb cut (driveways) restrictions between Fwy 99 and McHenry Avenue. Thus, in 2008, Kiernan Avenue was downgraded as the preferred east/west connector by StanCOG with one of the major factors being too many curb cuts!

It is important to note that when the Salida NOW Initiative was being promoted to the public, the new expressway within the Salida Plan was to be paid for by developer fees by the build out of the plan. From the initiative as adopted by the BOS in August 2007:

Require that the development of the Salida Community Plan Amendment Area pay its own way and ensure that existing County residents are not financially burdened.

The population projections created by the Salida developer for the Riverbank and Oakdale areas generate "a need" for more and more roadway lanes across our north county. Despite Kiernan Avenue (a state designated highway) expanding from two lanes to six lanes, and Pelandale Expressway (a Modesto developer fee expansion) expanding from two lanes to six lanes, there is "a need" for more lanes says StanCOG.

Recently a Superior Court judge ruled that the City of Livingston used flawed population projections to justify a huge increase to their 2025 General Plan Update. The ruling said: *The City's reliance on an unsupported population growth figure to support a statement of overriding considerations as to the numerous unmitigated impacts is unreasonable and appears to be a random leap from "evidence to conclusions.* Local leaders relying on huge population projections to rationalize grand transportation routes may want to rethink their choices.

FWG has worked diligently for over 10 years to promote smart land use choices. Thus, the area north of Kiernan Avenue, with the highest soil qualities ranking by the state, must be considered for its agricultural productivity and ground water recharge capabilities. Considerations must be made to minimize negative impacts of urban transportation plans. Plans to serve and connect urban areas must do so with minimal negative impact to existing communities, including agricultural communities.

Considerations for east-west roadways must include incremental and long-term costs to our communities. If community leaders truly desire to provide the best transportation dollar for our buck, they will choose alternatives such as making Kiernan Avenue work.



**CALIFORNIA
HIGH-SPEED RAIL
AUTHORITY**

The proposed 800-mile high-speed train system will provide Californians with a fast, safe, reliable and environmentally-friendly transportation alternative, linking all major cities in the state.

For Information Call 1-800-881-5799 or visit www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov

FWG Executive Board

Chair

Denny Jackman

Vice Chair

Chance Carrico

Treasurer

Audie Dahlgren

Secretary

Jeani Ferrari

Directors

JoAnn DiGiovanni

Jojo Espiritu

Ron Freitas

Allen Gammon

E. Timothy Parker

Rudy Platzek

Ana Ringsted

Phil Rockey

Advisory Board

Tim Byrd

Deidre Kelsey

Vance Kennedy, PhD

Garrad Marsh

Al Sokolow, PhD

Diana Westmoreland

Pedroso

A donation has been made:

*In honor of
Farmland Working Group
Board of Directors*

*by
Audie Dahlgren*

*Jeani Ferrari
by
Darlene Cornwall*

*Jeani Ferrari
by
Linda Sanders*

**Schmidt, Bettencourt &
Medeiros, LLP**

Turlock, CA
and

Calone Law Group, LLP
Stockton, CA

*by
Farmland Working Group
Board of Directors*

FARMLAND WORKING GROUP

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



www.farmlandworkinggroup.org

December

IS MEMBERSHIP MONTH



When you renew or become a member
you receive a gift membership at no cost!

Our Wishes for 2010 Our Wishes for 2010 Our Wishes for 2010

CONSERVE OUR BEST SOILS • FARMLAND MITIGATION POLICIES FOR EVERY CITY • BUFFERS BETWEEN EVERY CITY • SMART GROWTH IN EVERY CITY • MORE EFFICIENT LAND USE WITHIN OUR CITIES • MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING • URBAN LIMITS • WALKABLE COMMUNITIES • CLEAN AIR • MORE AND REAL REGIONAL PLANNING • CLEAN WATER • REAL FARMLAND PROTECTION • FARMLAND FOREVER • RESPECT OUR HERITAGE • LOCAL FOOD IN SCHOOLS • BALANCED GROWTH • FOOD SECURITY • WATER CONSERVATION • JOBS/ HOUSING BALANCE • BUILD ON LESSER SOILS • INFORMED VOTERS

Our Wishes for 2010 Our Wishes for 2010 Our Wishes for 2010