

Farmland Working Group

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

2012: A VERY GOOD YEAR FOR SMART GROWTH

TURLOCK'S NEW GENERAL PLAN

Congratulations to all of you that have been following the General Plan Update process over the past four years! This is a major milestone for the City of Turlock that could not have been accomplished without your participation and input. This is one of the first times in a project of this magnitude where the community feedback and opinion resulted in the selection of an alternative to the project presented in the environmental impact report. The Council made this decision with great consideration of the facts and testimony presented by you.

I hope this will encourage you to stay involved in other decisions as the City proceeds with the implementation of the new General Plan. This is really just the start to a great deal of work that the City will be doing to maintain and improve the quality of life in the City of Turlock. The City is required by State Law to prepare an annual General Plan Report on the

City's progress in implementing its General Plan. Information will be provided on the City web page, as it is available.

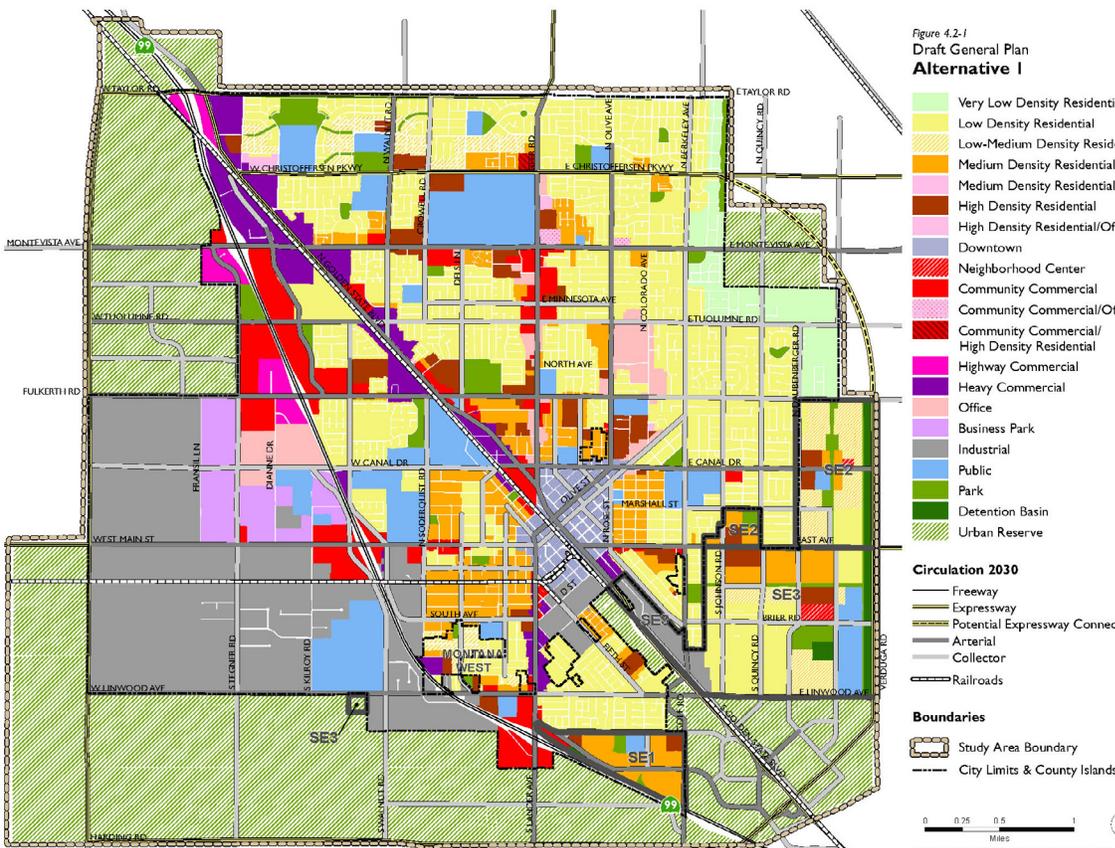
Debbie Whitmore
Turlock Planning Division

HUGHSON PLANNING PROPOSAL

The City of Hughson has held one public hearing at the Planning Commission level to discuss the Hughson Farmland Preservation Program. Another public hearing is scheduled and adoption of the ordinance for the City Council meeting of January 14, 2012. The Planning Commission realizes that any expansion of our city limits will be on prime farmland. Unfortunately, we can't avoid it. The commission asked for a farmland preservation program that had permanent easements at a ratio greater than 1:1 for every acre of land converted to urban use. A ratio of 1:1 would save only 50% of the prime

farmland left in the county. The proposed Farmland Preservation Program recommended for adoption by the City Council has a 2:1 ratio.

This farmland preservation program is about protecting prime farmland, strengthening our \$3 billion agricultural industry, and recognizing that Hughson is a farming community and is tied to agriculture economically and culturally as well. Hughson was the first city in the county to adopt an Urban Growth Boundary. The City Council adopted our sphere of influence line as the urban growth boundary through 2050. The General Plan, adopted



(Continued on page 3)



Message from the Chair

Love Healthy Food : Hate Food Waste

This end of year season offers opportunity to reflect on our personal and collective achievements as we look forward to selecting fresh goals for the new year. But three important events belong on everyone's radar:

1. Experts and weatherpersons agree that 2012 has been the warmest year of our lives.
2. Obvious adverse climate changes can not be ignored. For example, wide spread drought has scorched middle America. Without water, less food can be produced and higher food prices will surely follow.
3. While standing on a so called "fiscal cliff," we are also facing a "food cliff" leading to increasing food shortages, nationally and internationally.

The good news is that action by food producers, businesses and consumers can manage our food resources better to waste less food.

Average American households of four waste an estimated \$1,300 to \$2,275 of food annually. And average Americans discard 10 times as much food

as average Southeast Asians. Food recovered by reducing losses by just 15% could feed annually an estimated 25 million Americans, needed now, because one in six Americans already lack secure food supplies. Substantial gains are possible. Indeed, in only five years, household food waste in the United Kingdom has been reduced 18 percent. And a European report estimates that if food wastes were removed from landfills, methane gas emissions from decomposing food could be reduced; and this reduction would be equivalent to removing 20% of all cars in the country. Likewise, uneaten food in the US often ends up rotting in landfills also where it accounts for almost 25% of US methane emissions. Remember that methane is a greenhouse gas more toxic environmentally than carbon dioxide.

Consider the following:

- 40% of food in the US goes uneaten.
- Food production in America is consuming 10% of our total energy while swallowing up 80% of our fresh water.
- Each year Americans throw away food worth an estimated 165 billion dollars.

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"FRACKING" AND ITS EFFECTS ON GROUNDWATER QUALITY

"Fracking" is a term used to describe pressure injection below ground to fracture low permeability rocks so natural gas can escape to the surface for our use. Some news stories about fracking for natural gas have indicated that applying pressure below has caused surface problems, such as lakes or ponds that can catch fire. It is yet to be determined the extent to which this practice is good or bad over the long term.

Closer to home some concerns involve the movement and/or contamination of our groundwater, caused by pressure injection below us. We don't know what will happen below us when we pressure inject because of many factors. Different underground rocks respond in various ways. Water aquifers too lie beneath us at multiple depths and in varying sizes and shapes. Pressure injection applied at any point may have effects far away. What happens to the gases, dirty waters, and materials below us when pushed? Will our fresh water aquifers be compromised and polluted?

A central valley potential problem may exist that has been largely ignored. That is the possible forcing of connate (original) water upward into

overlying drinking-water aquifers. That connate water is likely salty and contain other contaminants. Because water is essentially incompressible, any injected water will force existing water upward. Depending on whether this upward pressure can be accommodated by lateral flow in overlying aquifers or concentrated in porous vertical paths, will determine whether shallow groundwater will be harmed by the fracking process.

Several years ago I objected to the State regarding the permitted injection of waste water below 3000 feet depth, here in the valley. The permit was for a maximum of 3 million gallons per day for 10 years. Finally, I received a response from a State engineering outfit saying that there was no problem, but ignoring my question about displacement of connate water. The problem may not show up for a long time, but, if it does, it may be impossible to correct within any reasonable time or cost.

Fracking may result in harm to fresh groundwater by injecting and/or storing huge volumes of injected fluids below us. We simply do not know yet.

Vance Kennedy, Ph.D

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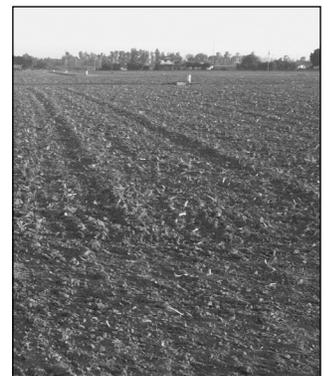
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LAFCO NEW AG POLICY - STANISLAUS COUNTY ADOPTS MONUMENTAL RULES TO PROTECT FARMLAND

The curse of sprawl may not disappear now that bold new growth rules have been laid down in Stanislaus County. But they are likely to slow a steady outward creep of houses on the fringe of cities, a familiar sight throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

Wednesday's decision by the county's growth-regulating agency — the region's first to embrace a particular type of farmland protection — signaled a change of heart in some elected leaders. It's time we do more, they said, to set aside some of the planet's richest soil and slow the traffic and air pollution that bring us down.

A monumental vote? Perhaps. The test will come when a city puts forth an annexation request, which could take a while in this economic slump.

It's clear, however, that people far and wide with stakes in the struggle to safeguard farmland were watching. "You are far ahead of other LAFCo's in the valley," the American Farmland Trust's Dan O'Connell told Stanislaus Local Agency Formation Commission members before their landmark 4-1 vote. "All eyes are upon you."

Similar policies have been enacted in counties such as Napa, San Luis Obispo, Santa Clara, Ventura and Yolo — but nowhere around here. "You're right there on the cutting edge," John Gamper, director of land use for the California Farm Bureau Federation, said Thursday.

It's not the first time.

(Continued from page 1)

in 2005, anticipated that we would reach build-out in 2025; so we really held the line tight.

The Planning Directors in Stanislaus County are hosting a mini-conference on January 26 (Saturday) that is intended to give elected and appointed officials tools for development of their own programs. We anticipate that a representative from SOAR (Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources, Ventura County) will speak. The organization has been working on long-term farmland preservation for over 40 years. The Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) has been in existence since

Last year, county leaders prevailed in a California Supreme Court dispute with home builders over the county's controversial farmland mitigation policy. It requires that acreage equal to that needed for new subdivisions be permanently preserved for agriculture.

The new LAFCo policy requires that cities do the same when they apply to annex land — often, hundreds of acres at a time. It's costly for cities and developers, which must arrange or pay to establish conservation easements, typically monitored by third-party land trusts.... An option under the new policy enables cities to get around so-called mitigation, if they can persuade their voters to adopt growth boundaries limiting expansion for a certain time period. That idea was roundly debated ... The only dissenting vote was not cast in opposition to farmland, but because that commissioner felt the voter exemption weakens the new policy. Change in leaders' outlook

With the vote, "We moved one rung up the ladder to making things better for everyone," said Allen Gammon, chairman of the Farmland Working Group. "Whether it's effective will depend on the next vote and the background campaigning and arm-twisting by those who want an exception."

The change in leaders' outlook might be a natural result of decades of private advocacy. Both avant-garde policies — county and LAFCo — came after voters in 2008 approved Measure E, a private initiative restricting subdivisions in unincorporated areas.

Denny Jackman, a former Modesto city councilman who championed Measure E after leaving office, applauded Wednesday's decision.

from The Modesto Bee
Garth Stapley - Sep. 29, 2012

read the complete article :

http://www.modbee.com/2012/09/29/2394507/lafco-adopts-monumental-rules.html?story_link=email_msg

1985 and has a very successful farmland conservancy program. MALT will be represented at the conference, bringing information to Valley policy makers on what works and what doesn't. There is limited seating for this event so RSVP early to Stephanie Ocasio [socasio@cityofnewman.com].

Thom Clark
Community Development Director
City of Hughson



WE ARE WATCHING...

High Speed Rail

www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov

The California High-Speed Rail Authority approved \$20 million to mitigate the loss of farmland due to construction of the Merced to Bakersfield route section. The Merced County Farm Bureau calls the amount, about \$8,000 per acre, inadequate and suggested \$25,000/acre. The Bureau and others have sued the rail authority seeking an injunction to block planning, land-buying and construction work on the Merced-Fresno portion of the HSR.

Stanislaus County

www.co.stanislaus.ca.us

Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) has approved a precedent setting policy for farmland protection. The policy requires the nine cities in Stanislaus County, upon request to extend city limits or sphere of influence growth boundaries, to submit a Plan for Agricultural Preservation. Read it online: www.stanislauslafco.org/info/PDF/POLICY/AgPolicy.09262012.pdf

Turlock

www.ci.turlock.ca.us

The Turlock City Council adopted "an environmentally superior" Turlock General Plan in September, 2012. The Council agreed with a unanimous Planning Commission that chose the least sprawl scenario. The plan focuses on directing growth into areas of existing development in the southeast area and avoiding expansion west of Freeway 99 over prime farmland. Read it online: www.gpupdate.turlock.ca.us/documents.html#feir

Oakdale

www.ci.oakdale.ca.us

The proposed General Plan requires that all development of new areas be pursuant to a Specific Plan which implements the provisions of the recently-adopted LAFCO policy for agricultural land. Two new Specific Plans, as proposed, each include a requirement for mitigation of conversion of agricultural land to residential use through the establishment of agricultural conservation easements in a 1:1 ratio, pursuant to the LAFCO policy.

Hughson

www.hughson.org

The Planning Commission has forwarded for Council approval at their January 14, 2013 meeting, a Farmland Preservation Program that goes beyond the new LAFCO mitigation policy recommendation of acre for acre mitiga-

tion. The PC report calls for a 2-to-1 mitigation ratio for land converted from ag. to urban use.

Patterson

www.ci.patterson.ca.us

The City lost its bid for the second Amazon.com major warehouse in our region to Tracy. It is important to note that despite the fact that Tracy has a farmland mitigation requirement that it did not deter choosing that location over Patterson, which requires no farmland protection.

Modesto

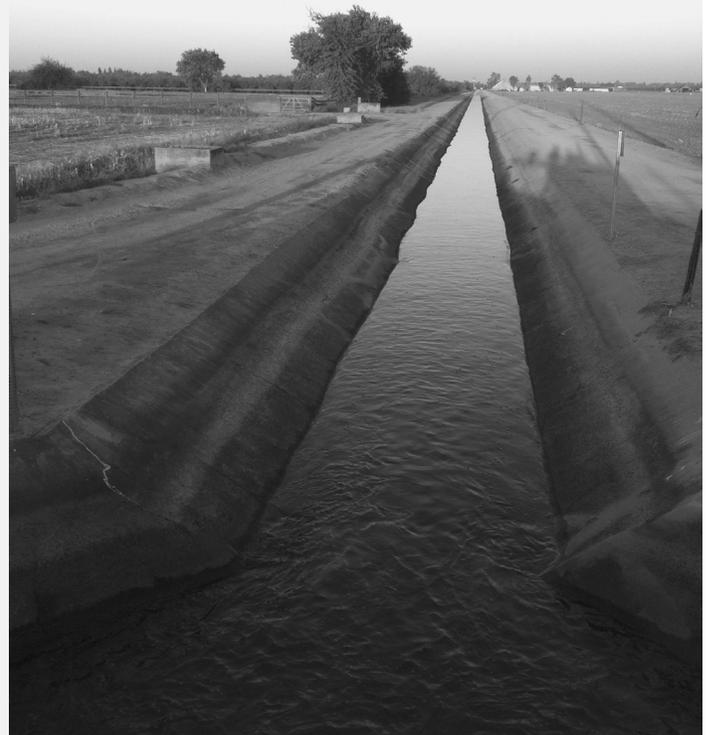
www.modestogov.com

The City and Stanislaus County have teamed and are awaiting a report regarding the Salida Community Planning Area. It is likely that no significant action will take place by Modesto until those costs are analyzed to determine action by either party regarding land-use planning.

Merced County

<http://www.co.merced.ca.us>

The Board of Supervisors have approved a 110-megawatt solar project that will cover 1,012 acres near Santa Nella. A 2-1 mitigation agreement means that for every acre of prime agricultural land consumed two acres are to be preserved. Of the 1,012 acres used for the project, 496 acres were considered prime, thus 992 acres are to be saved.



CHECK OUT OUR NEW LOOK

Farmland Working Group

P.O. Box 948, Turlock, CA 95381

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

209.343.4174

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- SIGN UP NOW



Striving to protect food, families & farmland.

WE'RE WATCHING

ABOUT FARMLAND WORKING GROUP (FWG)

Farmland Working Group is committed to preserving the agricultural foundation of our region and promoting smart growth in our urban communities through education, outreach and action.

Take a moment to learn more about our grassroots organization. FWG is a loud and persistent voice for balanced growth and we believe that we can influence city and county leadership to move to its highest aspirations.

One by one, our membership organization is making a difference. Your support keeps us going and growing. Please consider joining Farmland Working Group and becoming part of the solution!

Farmland Working Group has a history of empowering the public. Learn more about our 501(c)(3) educational organization.

Stay Connected! Sign up for our Newsletter

Name

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Subject

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History
In 1995, at the request of Congressman Gary Condit, a diverse group was asked to attend a meeting regarding the conversion of agricultural lands in our region of the Central Valley of California. The broad range of individuals continued meeting to discuss the important issues of preserving agricultural land.

Over time, a core group from the original meeting identified itself as Farmland Working Group. In 1999, FWG adopted By-laws of Incorporation and By-laws and filed as a 501(c)(3) corporation. With a focus on education, FWG created a Vision and a Legacy, and curriculum appropriate for schools, community organizations, clubs and classrooms. A second video, A Part of the Soil, was produced in 2003.

Since 1999, Farmland Working Group has been a voice for responsible land use and the long-term capability for food production in our region – the world's most productive farmland. With the Central Valley of California projected to be one of the fastest growing regions in the nation, what will become of our prime irrigated farmland – how can we not become another Los Angeles basin?

Mission Statement:

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



High School Program

The Farmland Working Group can provide videos, curriculum and speakers for teachers who want to participate in the High School Program. If interested, please contact Denny Jackman at (209) 343-4174 or submit the following application to P.O. Box 948, Turlock, CA 95381

[High School Scholarship Program Application](#)

Community Outreach

Farmland Working Group Community Advocates are dedicated to protecting farmland in Stanislaus and Merced Counties. Our advocates are the spokespeople on the lines of local farmland protection. They work tirelessly to protect our agricultural lands and promote sound urban development, long-range planning and balanced growth.

FWG remains committed to responsible land use. Through effective, organized grassroots activism, we keep a watch on local planning commissions, city councils, boards of supervisors in Stanislaus and Merced Counties. Farmland Working Group works closely with other organizations whose focus is farmland protection and



USEFUL LINKS

[American Farmland Trust \(AFT\)](#)

[Central Valley Farmland Trust \(CVFT\)](#)

[Merced County Farm Bureau](#)

[Stanislaus County Farm Bureau](#)

[Great Valley Center, Modesto, CA](#)

[California Women for Agriculture \(CWA\)](#)

[Valley Land Alliance, Merced, CA](#)

[California High-Speed Rail Authority](#)



OUTSIDE NEWS ARTICLES

<http://www.turlockjournal.com/section/14/article/16719/>

<http://www.modbee.com/2012/09/11/2369025/farmland-mitigation-benefits-multiply.html>

<http://www.modbee.com/2012/09/09/2366142/patterson-annexation-plan-omits.html>

<http://www.modbee.com/2012/08/31/2353515/3-billion-and-growing-crop-report.html>

<http://www.modbee.com/2012/08>

Farmland Working Group

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

www.farmlandworkinggroup.org

**Our Wish for 2013:
Food Security
For Future
Generations**

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
e-mail: fmmp@conservation.ca.gov
© California Department of Conservation,
Division of Land Resource Protection, 2010

CLASSIFICATION

- PRIME FARMLAND
- FARMLAND OF STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE
- UNIQUE FARMLAND
- FARMLAND OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE
- GRAZING LAND
- URBAN AND BUILT-UP LAND
- OTHER LAND
- WATER

Other Features

- NOT MAPPED
- 2008 FMMP SURVEY BOUNDARY
- COUNTY LINE
- MAJOR ROAD
- COUNTY SEAT

