

# Farmland Working Group

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

## American Farmland Trust

**Committed to the long-term sustainability of agriculture**

*The San Joaquin Valley is not only an agricultural asset to California but also the entire nation. Valued at \$34 billion and representing 63% of the state's agricultural revenues, there is no question that the valley's agricultural economy supports us all!*



In American Farmland Trust's 35 years of being in the San Joaquin Valley, we've understood the increasing challenges surrounding water scarcity, a changing climate, new regulations, and a growing population. We believe that addressing these challenges necessitates a holistic approach. Through the combination of farmland protection, climate-smart agriculture, and keeping farmers on the land, AFT is committed to ensuring a thriving future for agriculture in the valley. Our current work spans research, technical assistance, policy advocacy, farmland protection, and soil health and water reliability projects.

Farmers Combat Climate Change: AFT's Farmers Combat Climate Change initiative includes research, policy recommendations, and promotion of production methods aimed at sequestering carbon and improving soil health and water reliability. Within this area, we are implementing various projects centered around the valley's agricultural land, farmers, and landowners, including:

- **San Joaquin Land and Water Strategy:** Released in July 2018, the San Joaquin Land and Water Strategy was the result of ground-breaking research intended to increase attention on the region's farmland by linking it to relevant water issues. AFT and the Conservation Biology Institute assessed the capacity and resilience of agricultural production in the valley by analyzing the distribution of quality agricultural resources. In tandem with the findings, AFT has initiated a multi-year program centered around the development of agricultural land protection, water conservation, and groundwater recharge projects in the region.
- **Accelerating Soil Health Adoption by Quantifying Economic and Environmental Outcomes:** This on-the-ground project identifies the economic benefits farmers realized from successful soil health outcomes through a collection of case studies. Valley farmers will be featured in the case study collection in order to work toward scaling up adoption of these practices statewide.

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



**Saving Farmland, Growing Cities:** AFT's motivation behind our Saving Farmland, Growing Cities initiative is to reduce the conversion of farmland at the urban edge and promote sound policy decisions. Our current work entails engaging with the Merced City Council and Merced County Local Agency Formation Commission

around farmland preservation policies. In addition, we continue to monitor the Fresno General Plan and submit comments when there are attempts to roll back key measures of the adopted agricultural preservation policy.

**Women for the Land:** Our Women for the Land program supports female landowners in accessing resources and building strong networks around succession planning, landowner-farmer relations, and whole-farm conservation. A key element of the program are conservation learning circles, which serve as a forum for landowners to connect with each other and technical assistance providers. We will be hosting our first learning circle in the valley in early 2019.

**Agricultural Land Protection:** Understanding that prime farmland and natural resource conservation is extremely vital in the valley, AFT utilizes conservation easements to protect farmland and ranchland through our Agricultural Land Protection program. AFT maintains 19 easements in the valley, representing the majority of our statewide easements.

In considering the totality of our work in the valley, partnerships and community support remain central to what we're aiming to accomplish. We invite you to stay in touch (<https://farmland.salsalabs.org/signup/index.html>) with us to learn about how you can get involved in the future!

**Kara Heckert,**  
*California State Director, American Farmland Trust*



# San Joaquin Land and Water Strategy

Exploring the Intersection of Agricultural Land & Water Resources in California's San Joaquin Valley

- Water scarcity, a changing climate, new regulations, and a growing population are just some of the challenges facing farmers and farmland in the San Joaquin Valley, California's largest agricultural region.
- To protect the most important farmland and water supplies in the region, American Farmland Trust (AFT) and Conservation Biology Institute (CBI) analyzed the distribution, quality, and future impacts to the region's farmland and water resources.
- This analysis led to several conclusions:
  1. High-quality farmland (more productive, versatile, and resilient) with a reliable water source is very limited. Only **nine percent** of the roughly six million acres of irrigated farmland in the San Joaquin Valley is high quality and experiencing low-water stress.
  2. **As many as 323,000 acres** are projected to be converted into low-density urban and rural residential uses by 2050 in the San Joaquin Valley, mostly around cities. Fifty-five percent of agricultural land that has a high risk of development is high-quality farmland.
  3. Due to a variety of factors, **water demand could increase by 600,000 acre-feet per year** by mid-century.
  4. Groundwater regulations and proposed streamflow regulations are likely to reduce the amount of water available for farming. Thirteen percent of all agricultural water in the valley comes from over-drafted groundwater sources. Owing to increased evapotranspiration, **irrigation water may need to be augmented by 3.6 to 7.9 percent** in various parts of the San Joaquin Valley between now and mid-century.
- The findings of the study require further action to protect the San Joaquin Valley's best farmland and water supplies. In response, AFT is launching a multi-year program in partnership with willing farmers and ranchers to identify high-priority conservation easements and projects that promote groundwater recharge.
- In addition, AFT will continue its long-term commitment to advocating for local land use policies that drive smart growth and preserve the San Joaquin Valley's regional agriculture and natural resources.



## WE ARE WATCHING...

### County of Stanislaus

[www.stancounty.com](http://www.stancounty.com)

Public Works will begin construction on the intersection of Claribel Road and Roselle Avenue on Monday, October 15, 2018. The work to be done will include construction of road widening to accommodate turn lanes, and the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection.

Throughout the County intra-city connections typically lag far behind the needs created by an ever increasing volume of vehicles. In part, a problem of funding for such improvements is often generated by citizens of a city with impacts to County coffers. Crossroads shopping Center in Riverbank generates sales tax dollars, mostly for Riverbank and the state, while the County must fund a project in the county area. Similarly, many of the Crossroads shoppers are Modesto residents, thus those tax dollars go to Riverbank and not Modesto. This is a perfect example of why Salida finds it so difficult to fund city annexation. The Modesto Pelandale shopping area absorbs a tremendous amount of tax dollars that come from Salida based citizens.

2018 is the 10 year anniversary of the citizen adopted, countywide, Measure E Initiative known as the "Stamp Out Sprawl" (SOS) Initiative. In February 2008 the voters of Stanislaus County overwhelmingly supported (nearly 70%) this ballot initiative.

Within the text of the measure were these public purpose and findings:

#### ***I. Purpose and Findings.***

A. Purpose. The purposes of this initiative measure are to: (1) establish a mechanism for direct citizen participation in land-use decisions affecting County policies, and (2) minimize sprawl, reduce transportation costs, maintain farmland, and secure the fees necessary to provide for the cost of needed services by directing development into incorporated cities.

B. Findings. The voters of Stanislaus County find: 1. The protection of existing agricultural and open space lands in Stanislaus County is of critical importance to the County's present and future residents. Agriculture has been and remains a major contributor to local and regional economy. Agriculture creates direct and indirect employment for many people, provides valuable food crops distributed worldwide, and defines the County's identity and way of life.

2. Continued urban residential encroachment into agricultural and open space lands impairs agriculture and threatens the public health, safety, and welfare. Such encroachment causes increased traffic congestion and air pollution, and threatens the quantity and quality of water supplies. Continued urban encroachment into agricultural lands also requires significant new public infrastructures and facilities, places additional stresses on existing public infrastructure and facilities, and increases costs on existing residents.

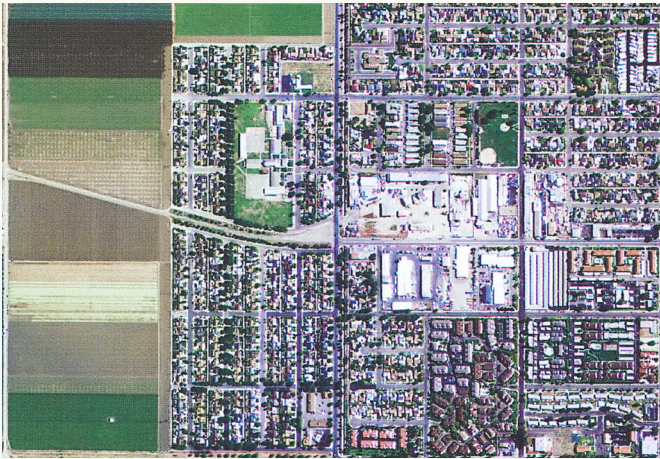
3. The unique character of Stanislaus County and the quality of life enjoyed by County residents depend on the protection of agricultural and open space lands. The protection of such lands aids the continued viability of agriculture, defines urban/rural boundary, and brings mental and physical benefits from the broad vistas at the urban edge.

4. This Citizen's Right to Vote on Expansion of Residential Areas policy establishes a mechanism for direct voter participation into land-use decisions authorizing residential development of lands designated for agricultural or open space uses. Providing for such participation is consistent with, and builds upon, existing General Plan policies designed to protect agricultural land and open space.





## WE ARE WATCHING...



### City of Modesto

<https://www.modestogov.com/>

A start for a new General Plan could commence in 2019, dependent on funding availability. The current GP was adopted for 30 years in 1995. Discussion will renew about why, where, how we are to grow.

Currently plans are moving forward for numerous projects around the City. Fairview Village, south of the Tuolumne River, may generate more housing. Expect impacts to Carpenter Road and other services are covered. Housing in the Glenwood area, along Pelandale Expressway, will continue to add housing to that ongoing project. Tivoli, a major combination housing, schools, parks, shopping centers, may start to take shape within a couple of years. This project was started at the beginning of this century. Modesto housing has expanded around 1% over the last

decade. One of the major roadblocks has been the ability of the City to provide services to the planning area.

The most significant planning by the City will be focused on the downtown proper. A comprehensive study and plan are being initiated by the Community Development Dept. and its new Director Jaylen French.

### City of Riverbank

[www.riverbank.org/](http://www.riverbank.org/)

One of the largest projects in Stanislaus County is advancing in Riverbank. The Crossroads West Project at the western edge of the City, just west of the existing Crossroads Shopping Center, corner of Oakdale and Claribel Roads. This project was approved by LAFCO and consumes mostly prime farmland. One of the bigger problems is the threat of sprawl at it's outside edges in the County of Stanislaus.

While the citizens initiative Measure E prevents housing development in County jurisdiction, it does not curb commercial and/or industrial development. Should a business want to sprawl beyond this project, outside, City oversight and taxing to cover cost associated with development would not apply. Thus, the potential for leapfrog development. To view the City plan go to: <http://www.riverbank.org/DocumentCenter/View/1628/Draft-Crossroads-West-Specific-Plan-June-18-2018>

### *Cumulative impact of high water stress and development risk.*

	All Agricultural Land	High-Quality Land
High Development Risk	543,336	296,854
High Water Stress	1,713,274	1,020,368
Both	185,175	132,520
Total Dev. Risk or Water Stress	2,256,610	1,317,222
Total Agricultural Land	6,106,044	2,566,080
Percent of Total Agricultural Land	37%	51%



## *Message from Founding Director*

**Denny Jackman**

*Letters to the Editor,  
Thursday, Nov. 22,  
2018 – The Modesto  
Bee*

### **Protect foundation of all our feasts**

*We are thankful for the bounty we share. The massive harvest, especially from California, would have overwhelmed our Pilgrim predecessors. Billions of servings of food products make their way to tables around the world with ever increasing efficiency. Weather, land and water compliment the ongoing efforts by millions of people working to grow, process and distribute food for our Thanksgiving Day feasts and for everyday life.*

*During and beyond this Thanksgiving season we hold the opportunity to secure and enhance our moral responsibility as food providers for the*

*world. As we grow together, we can also grow smarter. We must avoid allowing masses of humanity to sprawl onto and over the very land used to nourish us. We can plan better, grow better and be better.*

*We can choose to protect our best soils for growing food, providing a legacy for future generations.*

*Every California city and county is required to develop land-use plans. Let's tell our elected officials that our continuing bounty of food products depends on wise use of California's land and water resources. We can't all live in the garden, but thanks to farming in our region all of us have a seat at our nation's abundant Thanksgiving Day table.*

*Happy Thanksgiving Day, America!*

*Denny Jackman, Modesto*

### **FWG Executive Board**

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**Luncheon at  
Galletto's hosted  
by AFT national  
President, John  
Piotti and Shawn  
Shepherd, West  
Coast Director of  
Development.**

**The roundtable  
talk focused on  
the needs of the  
Central Valley and  
many exciting things  
happening in the  
state with a high  
priority placed on  
our region of the  
Central Valley.**



**BACK:** Shawn Shepherd, Jeani Ferrari - Farmland Working Group, Frank Damrell III - Representative for State Senator, Cathleen Galgiani **FRONT:** Paul Wenger - Trustee, CFT (Former President, California Farm Bureau Federation), John Piotti, Ron Freitas - Board Member, CFT (Former Director, Stanislaus County Planning Department), Tim Byrd - Board Member, CFT (Deputy General Counsel, E&J Gallo Winery), Denny Jackman - Board Member, CFT (Founding Member, Farmland Working Group)





# Farmland Working Group

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 [www.farmlandworkinggroup.org](http://www.farmlandworkinggroup.org)



**DECEMBER IS MEMBERSHIP MONTH**

## OUR WISH FOR 2019

- Stabilization of urban edges
- Permanent protection of farmland
- Long-term sustainability of agriculture

“...Clearly, California will soon need to choose if it wants an agricultural or an urban Central Valley. The stakes are enormous and the challenge to the state is daunting.

To save the Valley from the fate of urbanization, it is now time to start thinking that the Valley’s urban boundaries can eventually be stabilized in order to secure a significant portion of our nation’s future food supply...”

Rudy Platzek (1930 - 2017)