

CDP Background and Discussion: Agriculture

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Summary

The SGMP includes Agriculture and Ranching Element which identifies agriculture as a key to sustainability and is crucial to sustaining the diversity of cultures, local economy and the overall quality of life for residents of the County. The question is: in what way can the new code address agriculture?

The CDP questions relate to what uses are appropriate for agriculture, how can agricultural land be set aside, and does water usage relate to sustainability.

Existing Code and Policies regarding Agriculture

The current county code and regulations for agriculture is summarized below:

AGRICULTURAL, GRAZING AND RANCHING USES

Agricultural, grazing and ranching uses and construction of fences and accessory structures related to those uses are permitted anywhere in the County, provided the use of the land or the fence or accessory structure complies with the requirements of other sections of the Code, including but not limited to the density regulations of the Code. Application for a development permit is not required for these uses, unless the provisions of other sections of the Code apply.

Commercial feedlots are not considered to be agriculture, grazing or ranching uses. The height of all structures associated is limited to a maximum of thirty six (36') feet in height.

What are some of the problems with the existing code?

The current Code and regulations for agriculture are confusing. Agricultural tax exemptions are not part of the Code.

What do the SGMP policies state about Agriculture?

Policies and Strategies (Chapter 3: Economy):

- Policy 8.4: Agriculture, ranching and community-based agriculture will be supported and protected as a critical component of the County's economy.

CDP Background and Discussion: Agriculture
Keys to Sustainability (Chapter 4: Agriculture):

- **2. Protect agricultural and ranch lands through a variety of incentives and tools.** Agriculture can be protected and supported through technical assistance, incentives and tools such as: transfer and purchase of development rights programs, conservation and development easements, state and federal income tax credits and deductions.
- **3. Promote the use of clustering lots, homes and structures to preserve, protect and support agricultural uses.** Leap frog development should be discouraged as they not only break up agricultural land, but also have adverse effects on ongoing agricultural operations and the fiscal resources of the County.
- **6. Conservation of water increases water availability for agriculture.** Residential and commercial water users should emphasize conservation and water quality protection in order to support the availability of water for agricultural uses. Supporting the use of rain collection and water conservation are viable options. The use of rain fed agriculture where collected water is used to irrigate crops is an option for the future of community-based agriculture.

Policies and Strategies (Chapter 4: Agriculture):

- Strategy 14.1.1: New development in rural or agricultural areas should provide open space buffers adjacent to agricultural uses and scenic road where appropriate.
- Strategy 14.1.6: Create provisions allowing for the compatible accessory use of structures on agricultural lands.
- Strategy 14.2.1: Create a transfer of development rights program for agriculture and ranch lands.
- Strategy 14.2.2: Assess and develop resource tools such as conservation easements, improvement districts, development of impact fees and grants to support the viability of agricultural uses.
- Strategy 15.5.1: Support development of community gardens and other agricultural projects by providing water, land and infrastructure on County or public land where appropriate.
- Strategy 15.5.2: Allow the option for community gardens to be considered as part of the open space requirements for new development.
- Strategy 16.3.5: Require clustering of new development on acequia-irrigated agricultural land.

Agriculture Goals and Strategies:

- Support and revitalize agriculture & ranching SGMP Goal 14, Policies 14.1-14.4, Strategies 14.1.1-14.2.3
- Local Agricultural Production: SGMP Goal 15, Policies 15.1-15.5, Strategies:15.2.1-15.5.3
- Support Community Based Agriculture & Acequias: SGMP Goal 16, Policies 16.1-16.3, Strategies 16.3.1-16.3.6

Key Issues (Chapter 4: Agriculture):

- **3. Limited water supply and water quality issues.** The scarcity of water may limit agricultural productivity. Limited water supply and multiple demands and priorities on water results in the transfer of water rights away from arable land to other sources. Degradation of water supply and quality due to development threatens traditional agriculture as well. Large scale farming itself is a leading source of groundwater and surface water pollution due to fertilizers, pesticides and soil erosion. Best management practices must be implemented to address these conditions.
- **4. Shifting climate patterns.** Higher ambient air temperatures, fluctuations in wind patterns, evapo- transpiration and other interrelated weather patterns have contributed to prevailing drought conditions, altering or creating local microclimates. These shifting patterns will have long term effects on agricultural and acequia practices.

What agriculture policies in are there in existing community plans?

- Community Plans include policies supporting agriculture and acequias. This includes allowing roadside stands.

CDPs for Agriculture: Options and Discussion - General

What overall goal(s) do we have for agriculture? Why support agriculture?

Are there incentives that can be used to promote agriculture?

- ◆ **Transfer of development rights(TDR)/Purchase of development rights (PDR)?**
 - Development rights allow more dense development to take place somewhere else, in return for preserving agricultural lands.
- ◆ **Tax Incentives?**
 - May not be related to the code.

CDPs for Agriculture: Options and Discussion – Home Business

What should be allowed or restricted for a home based agriculture business? At what point or acreage does it become commercial?

- ◆ **Noise, light, visual impact**
 - Crops needs to be harvested at night sometimes
 - Tractors and farm equipment can be noisy, put out fumes, raise dust
- ◆ **# of employees, # of customers**
 - During harvests many workers could be needed. How many is still “home-based”?
 - Roads, access to fields, parking
- ◆ **Raw vs. processed?**
 - What types of support, processing or storage facilities are needed?
- ◆ **Impacts of agricultural operations**
 - Noise, odors, manure, waste
- ◆ **Surrounding Density**
 - How does it impact adjacent farmland?

CDPs for Agriculture: Options and Discussion –

Do SDA-1 or 2 area designations affect agriculture?

SDA-1 areas are considered to be higher density. SDA -2 areas include residential fringe and rural fringe.

- ◆ **If there is existing agriculture in a SDA-1 or 2, how will it be protected?**
- ◆ **Should there be incentives to maintain agriculture?**
- ◆ **What incentives could there be?**

How can density, clustering, or open space requirements be used to support agriculture?

- ◆ **Should open space be dedicated for agriculture or community gardens where feasible?**

Does the code need to deal with agricultural accessory buildings differently than other accessory structures?