

Intent: Farmers who want to construct nonresidential farm structures in the non-floodway portions of floodplains are required by the County under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to prepare or have prepared initial studies to determine whether such structures could cause significant environmental effects. Initial studies prepared for such structures in Sacramento County, however, have never identified potentials for significant environmental effects. Preparing initial studies is expensive and time-consuming. This issue primarily affects farmers in the Delta, Stone Lakes, and Cosumnes River areas of the County. The following policy seeks to ease the regulatory processes governing the building of farm accessory structures.

Policy:

AG-31. Allow, with the simplest regulatory and administrative procedures possible, the construction of non-residential farm accessory buildings in the floodway fringe provided such structures do not obstruct flood flows or impair public safety.

Implementation Measure:

A. Evaluate County ordinance to implement Federal Emergency Management Agency requirements to simplify the application process for constructing non-residential farm accessory buildings in the floodway fringe. Consider and pursue the adoption of state and federal legislation, as appropriate. (MSA-PLANNING, DWR)

AGRI-TOURISM ON AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Objective: Protect, conserve, and enhance agribusiness operations in Sacramento County for economic sustainability and viability.

AND

Promote the visibility of the farms, ranches, and properties participating and working towards protecting and sustaining agriculture in Sacramento County.

Intent: Defined as the overlap between agriculture and tourism, Agri-tourism is an activity, enterprise, or business that combines primary elements and characteristics of Sacramento County agriculture and tourism and provides an experience for visitors that stimulate economic activity and contributes to farm, ranch, and community income. Agri-tourism is a tool to assist the long-term economic sustainability, diversity and viability for some of the County's agricultural industry.

Currently, the County Zoning Code prohibits or severely restricts many Agri-tourism activities. For instance, the Zoning Code prohibits farmstand operators in agricultural zones from selling crops grown off the premises unless a conditional use permit is granted. Farmstand operators usually need to provide a large variety of fruits and vegetables throughout the year to attract and maintain customers.

In order to facilitate the wide array of tastes and resource opportunities of the agricultural community and County population, a diverse Agri-tourism enterprise must be created. An Agri-tourism program should be established by working with a variety of quasi-government organizations, nonprofits and other organizations to develop the framework of the program.

While Agri-tourism can serve as an important economic tool for the agricultural community, these types of uses must supplement, not replace, primary agricultural production. In addition, the potential impacts from these activities (such as increased traffic, number of visitors) on neighboring property owners and their agricultural operations must be minimized.

If Agri-tourism is to be successful, farmers, ranchers, participating landowners, and the County will need to develop an outreach campaign. The purpose of public awareness will be to introduce and maintain the presence of and need for preserving the quality of the agricultural land base, protecting the diversity of soils, and promoting the products in an agriculturally friendly manner. It can also serve to educate visitors and tourists about respecting the primary agricultural use of the land, as well as landowners' right to farm and use of the road.

The policies and implementation measures that follow outline the key components and provisions for the creation of an Agri-tourism Program for Sacramento County. The program shall be developed in phases for different geographical sections of the County. This will allow for a planning process that focuses on the specific opportunities and needs of the different agricultural areas of the County. The first phase of the program will address the Delta region. The Delta has many strong opportunities for a variety of Agri-tourism uses including, but not limited to, agriculture, historical and cultural education, habitat protection and recreation. The Agri-tourism program can build on the branding effort currently underway in the Delta, which includes a proposed "Discover the Delta" information center and installation of several "Entering the California Delta" road signs at major entry points.⁵ Any regulations and provisions established for this first phase of the program must be consistent with the Delta Protection Commission's *Land Use and Resource Management Plan for the Primary Zone of the Delta*, adopted February 23, 1995.

Policies:

AG-32. The County shall support a variety of Agri-tourism uses that encourages economic sustainability while still respecting and promoting the primary agriculture use of the land.

AG-33. The County shall support Agri-tourism for different geographical areas of the County that includes categorical definitions for intensity and type of uses that allow for flexibility in agricultural practices and market opportunities while paying particular attention to compatibility with surrounding uses.

⁵ Information from the Discover the Delta organization. www.discoverthedelta.com

AG-34. The County shall coordinate with quasi-government organizations, nonprofits, and other organizations to assess and evaluate market attractions as well as inventory, provide new and expanded tourism based economic opportunities for farmers and ranchers, discuss any public safety or liability concerns and provide staff resources for education and technical support if requested.

Implementation Measures:

A. Develop a County Agri-tourism Program that includes, but is not limited, to the following components. This program shall be developed in phases for specific geographical areas, with the first phase being created for the Delta:

- Work with quasi-government organizations, nonprofits, and other organizations, including but not limited to, the Delta Protection Commission, Sacramento County Farm Bureau, UC Cooperative Extension and Discover the Delta to develop the framework for the Agri-tourism program. (MSA-PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER).
- Amend zoning code to add provisions for agri-tourism uses. These amendments shall include regulations for uses allowed by right and uses that must go through discretionary review (such as a use permit). These uses must be related to and supplement, not replace, the primary agricultural use of the property. (MSA-PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER)
- Explore economic incentives and options regarding land use entitlement and building permit fees as part of the program. (MSA-PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER, LDSIR).
- Include provisions that address potential conflicts and compatibility issues with neighboring property owners and their agricultural production. (MSA-PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER)
- Work with the organizations identified in Implementation Measure A above to establish educational programs that promote the importance of locally-grown agricultural products. (MSA-PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER)

B. Review the County Right-to-Farm Ordinance to ensure the Agri-tourism program does not conflict with the provisions of the ordinance and that it continues to protect agricultural uses and landowners' right-to-farm. (MSA-PLANNING, AG COMMISSIONER)

C. Establish a network of harvest trails utilizing existing roadways within Agri-tourism areas. Work with the organizations identified in Implementation Measure A above to determine roadway areas of unincorporated Sacramento County that will be best suited for this

network and install signage that will promote the concept. (MSA-DOT, MSA-PLANNING, AG COMMISSIONER)

AGRICULTURAL LAND ASSESSMENTS

Objective: Increased equity of assessments on agricultural land for services that primarily benefit urban residents.

Intent: Several of the assessment districts established to serve rural areas of the County have become increasingly urbanized in recent decades. Some of the services provided by such districts benefit urban residents more than farmers or ranchers. Additionally, some districts recently established in urbanizing areas of the County primarily to serve urban residents include agricultural lands. Examples of such urban services include fire protection, park and recreation services, and neighborhood street lighting. Tax increases and assessments levied to pay for such services are often applied on the basis of a fixed per-parcel fee. Such taxes and assessments are inequitable insofar as the proportion of costs paid by farmers exceeds the proportion of benefits received by farmers. This inequity is usually greatest when per-parcel fees are levied on vacant parcels, i.e., parcels that support a farm operation but have no residences. The following policy would increase the equity of property assessments.

Policy:

AG-35. The County shall ensure that proposed changes in dependent special district levies are equitable, especially where such changes could unduly increase the tax burden on owners of agricultural lands.

Implementation Measures:

- A. Develop and adopt procedures to review and evaluate proposed changes in dependent special district levies with respect to the equity of their sharing of costs and benefits between owners of lands in Permanent-Agricultural zones and owners of lands in other zones. (AUDITOR-CONTROLLER)
- B. Require as a condition for adoption that proposed changes in dependent special district levies are equitable for owners of agricultural lands. (AUDITOR-CONTROLLER)