



Riverside County

AGRICULTURE

The official publication of Riverside County Farm Bureau, Inc.

A private, nonprofit organization serving farmers throughout Riverside County since 1917

RIVERSIDE COUNTY'S PROPOSED CONSTRAINED DEVELOPMENT AREAS ORDINANCE

By

Steven A. Pastor, Executive Director

Last year, the Riverside County Planning Department drafted a proposed ordinance entitled the "Protected Peaks and Ridges and Hillside Grading Ordinance."

The original intent of the ordinance was to "...establish criteria for hillside development within designated areas of Riverside County so that the visual quality of hillside areas along the protected peaks and ridges may be protected."

In other words, this ordinance was written specifically to protect the peaks and ridges in specific designated areas from over development. This ordinance, however, has now gone county wide and threatens the use of hillsides and peaks for agriculture purposes anywhere slopes are 25% or greater.

The ordinance has changed several times since last year including the name of the ordinance. The new name is Constrained Development Areas or commonly referred to as C-D Zones.

The Riverside County Farm Bureau (RCFB) has been working with the county's Planning Department to protect agriculture in these new C-D Zones. The Riverside County Farm Bureau has pointed out several areas where agriculture may be negatively affected by this proposed ordinance.

First, although the ordinance states that agriculture may still use hillsides for its crops (field, tree, flower, vegetables, herbs, etc) it does not list grazing as an approved use. Hillsides and peaks are currently being used for grazing. Second, even though the ordinance allows related agricultural activities, it excludes the construction of any accessory facilities even if the facilities are used for agricultural purposes. These facilities are necessary for commercial agricultural operations. The county defines accessory facilities as "Buildings, structures, roads, driveways, walls or fences incidental to a permitted, or conditionally permitted use." By excluding accessory facilities, the ordinance would require a plot plan and compliance with the ordinance's development standards for the installation of wells, water lines, roads, driveways, and fences, among other structures. As a result, the provisions allowing crops and related agricultural activities within the C-D Zone without the need for a plot plan or compliance with the ordinance's development standards are meaningless."

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News in Brief...

STATE CITES SUPERMARKETS FOR AD VIOLATIONS

A supermarket chain has been cited for allegedly advertising Mexican grapes as being California-grown. The state Department of Food and Agriculture said 48 "Food 4 Less" stores received citations for the reported advertising violations. The company says it was a printing error and posted signs in stores explaining the mistake. A Riverside County grape grower reportedly brought the matter to the attention of the local agricultural commissioner.

GOVERNMENT TO CONDUCT HORSE-HEALTH SURVEY

The situation has changed since the government last surveyed horse owners about how they protect their animals' health. In the seven years since the last nationwide survey, West Nile virus began striking horses. The disease killed more than 200 California horses last year, and sickened hundreds more. Horses can be vaccinated against the disease. About 200 Californians who own horses and other equines will be asked to participate in the health-management survey.

New Members Continued

- Mark Latham
- Adrain Liera
- Michael Mendoza
- Seyed Mirghafouri
- Jeff Paschall
- Edna Petersen
- Octavian Popaluca
- Melissa Pratt
- John Schumacher
- Carl Simmons
- Joanna Smith
- Ziad Tannous
- Pochoi Tse

MORE WEST NILE HORSE DEATHS

Two more horses have contracted West Nile virus, both are in Riverside County, and were euthanized. Neither of the two had been vaccinated. In addition, a horse from Kern County earlier reported as having the disease has died thus bringing the death toll to four. There have been six cases of horses infected with the disease in California thus far this year. The California Department of Food and Agriculture urges horse owners to begin a vaccination program for their animals as soon as possible.

FARMERS, FOOD BANKS COOPERATE TO FEED HUNGRY

A cooperative effort among farmers and food banks will distribute more than 10 million pounds of produce to needy families this year. Now in its 15th season, Ag Against Hunger supplies surplus fresh produce to food banks from its headquarters in Salinas. More than 50 grower-packers provide the organization with surplus food. Ag Against Hunger distributes the fresh produce to organizations throughout California and five other Western states.



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FARMERS, WORKERS COPE WITH HIGH TEMPERATURES

As much of California copes with a lengthy heat wave, farmers adjust their harvest schedules and take other steps to help themselves and their workers deal with the high temperatures. Farm-safety experts say many farmers alter work schedules, so harvest begins earlier in the morning and ends at midday. Farm groups have also distributed educational pamphlets to farmers, for them to provide to workers, about how to stay healthy in the heat.



JULY / AUGUST / SEPT 2005 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Jul. 27th - 8:00am - 2:00pm, Water Symposium, Perris Fairgrounds, Perris.
- Note - There will be no Board meeting in August.**
- Aug. 18th - 8:30am, TMDL Workshop, EMWD Headquarters, Perris.
- Aug. 24th - 10:00am, Budget Committee meeting, RCFB Office, Moreno Valley.
- Sept. 13th - 2:00pm, AQMD Workshop to explain how to sign-up for the Carl Moyer Program, RCFB Office, Moreno Valley.
- Sept. 14th - 6:30pm, RCFB Board of Directors meeting, Sizzler, Banning.
- Sept. 20th - 2:00pm, Budget Committee meeting, RCFB Office, Moreno Valley.
- Sept. 21st - 1:30pm, RCA meeting, CAC Building, Riverside.

.....Cont. from Front Cover.


Third, the county has failed to provide any maps of the proposed C-D Zones. How does a landowner know if his/her land is in a C-D Zone without any specific designated areas being defined? The county wants to pass the ordinance first and then produce maps later. This leaves landowners uncertain about the future of their land. Next, the ordinance gives the Planning Director discretion to determine whether a plot plan will be subject to CEQA compliance. Once again, the RCFB argues that no guidelines for the determination are provided, leaving wide latitude for the Planning Director to make his/her decision. The time and expense of preparing a plot plan and complying with CEQA (whether by negative declaration or EIR) would likely impair agricultural uses.

Another concern for agriculture is the county's definition of "disturbance." The county defines "disturbance" as "Alter the natural surface of the land or the natural vegetation by any means, including, but not limited to, grading, clearing, brushing or grubbing." In Section 16.16 of the draft ordinance, for example, it states that if a landowner has ten acres or more, he or she would only be able to "disturb" 65,340 square feet or about 1.50 acres. In other words, if a landowner has 100 acres on a hillside or peak, 98.50 acres could not be disturbed to plant agricultural commodities.


In summary, the RCFB is in favor of protecting Riverside County's hillsides and peaks, but not at the expense of limiting the growth of agriculture and eroding property rights. With few areas for agriculture to grow and expand, removing and restricting hillside use would be another divesting blow to agriculture in Riverside County.


Agriculture currently uses hillsides in Riverside County to grow a variety of crops including avocados, citrus crops, grains, grapes, and the grazing of cattle, goats, and sheep. Farmers and ranchers are excellent

stewards of the land and protect their investments. RCFB will continue to work with the county to refine this proposed ordinance. If you have any questions or suggestions about this issue, please call the RCFB office at 951.684.6732



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GEARING UP FOR THE FIGHT

The challenges we face on our farms and ranches continue to grow in complexity. It is evident each day that the root of these challenges is the unbalanced business climate created by overwhelming regulations and taxes disguised as fees. Farm Bureau counters these punches by working harder than ever to protect your farming way of life. The best way to improve our standing in this fight is to make sure we have people who value agriculture representing us in public office. That's what led to the establishment of the California Farm Bureau Fund to Protect the Family Farm (FARMPAC®) more than 30 years ago.


FARMPAC has been the muscle and voice representing farmers' interests by supporting state, local and federal candidates who value agriculture. Bipartisan in its task, FARMPAC contributes to political campaigns based upon the candidate's commitment to working in the best interests of the state's farmers and ranchers.

How do we increase our strength? If each Farm Bureau member contributed \$25 to FARMPAC, we could raise more than \$2 million annually to support candidates who share our values. With a statewide special election on the horizon and numerous races on the line in 2006, the time to mobilize is now! You, as a Farm Bureau member or friend, can support FARMPAC's efforts by attending FARMPAC fundraisers sponsored by your local county Farm Bureau or marking the appropriate box on your membership renewal form.

As the number of groups trying to further their interests in Sacramento grows, so does the importance of Farm Bureau flexing its muscle. Last fall, FARMPAC invested funds to support candidates such as Paul Betancourt, a Fresno Farm Bureau leader who boldly stepped up to represent his fellow farmers in the Assembly, and candidate for State Senate, Gary Podesto, the Stockton mayor who balanced the city budget and revitalized its downtown area, not to mention other candidates such as Assembly members Barbara Matthews, Doug LaMalfa, Bonnie Garcia and State Senator Abel Maldonado. There's no doubt that its aggressive investments last fall won Farm Bureau a new respect in the political arena.

Although contributions to FARMPAC are not tax deductible, they are investments in the future survival of your family farms and ranches. Your participation benefits agriculture and, ultimately, it benefits you.



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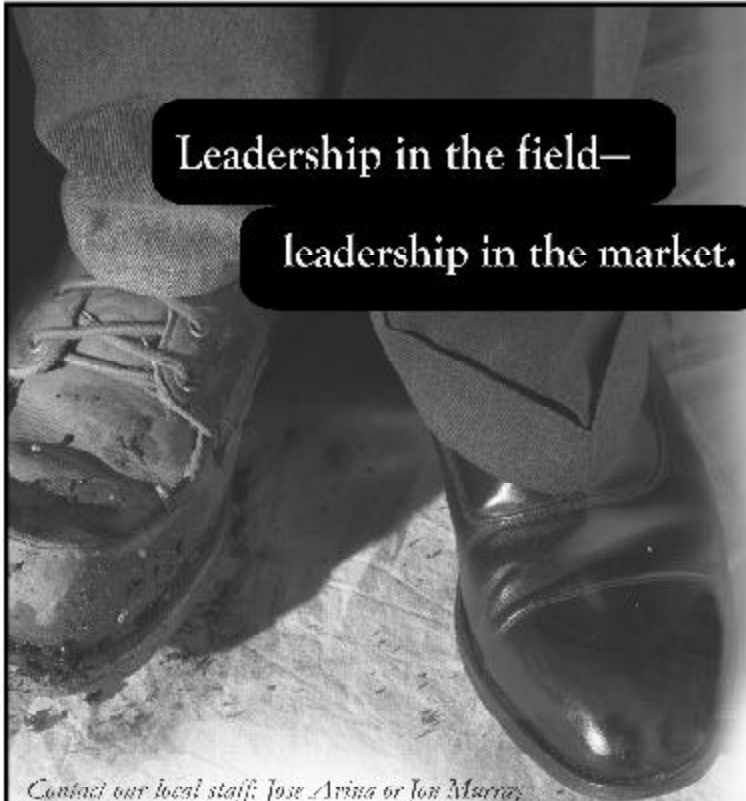



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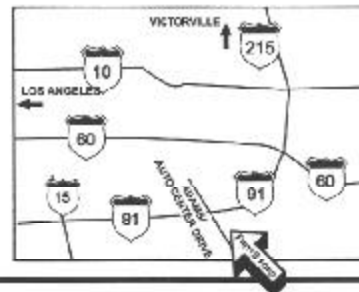
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Riverside County Farm Bureau's Board of Directors have endorsed Ben Drake, Stephen J. Corona, and Larry Libeu for the Rancho California Water District.



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