



Land Use & Housing Committee

Item #10-3-4
Information

February 25, 2010

Williamson Act Subventions Letter

Issue: The Governor's current 2010-2011 budget proposal suspends Williamson Act subventions. SACOG staff will send a letter to the Governor encouraging restoration of the subventions.

Recommendation: None; this item is for information only.

Discussion: In the final 2009-2010 budget, Governor Schwarzenegger effectively suspended California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act subvention funding by leaving only \$1,000 in the budget for the program. His current 2010-2011 budget proposal again eliminates the subventions. As a result of losing subventions for the Williamson Act, challenged county budgets throughout California are being further stressed due to their contractual obligations. Some counties are contemplating elimination of the program or assessing local fees to cover program costs. The SACOG region receives nearly \$2 million in subventions (Attachment A).

The Williamson Act has been successful in protecting 16.5 million acres of farmland throughout the state (about 740,000 acres or 1/3 of the farmland in the SACOG region) by offering property tax relief in return for rolling contracts to keep land in agriculture for 10 or 20 years. The program helps maintain farm viability and is one of just a few state programs that specifically targets farmland conservation. A recent California Farm Bureau Federation poll found that one in three farmers could not continue farming or ranching without the program. Many fear these lands could be converted to development in the absence of subventions.

SACOG analysis shows significant negative impacts on our region's Blueprint plan to slow urban growth and on emissions. As much as 22 percent of the population that would have otherwise located in Blueprint growth areas could end up in low density rural development. In one day, these households would produce carbon emissions that are roughly equal to one year's worth of carbon emissions from agriculture.

SACOG sent a letter to the Governor in July 2007 to express support of the Williamson Act subventions. In June 2009, the SACOG board also voted to send a letter in support of SB 715 to address enforcement concerns with the Williamson Act. In November 2009, the Land Use and Housing and Government Relations and Public Affairs committees heard testimony from the California Farm Bureau Federation and Yolo County regarding the impacts of losing subventions. In response, staff offered to write another letter in support of the subventions with an emphasis on how the Williamson Act supports the state's AB 32 and SB 375 objectives. That letter will be sent to the Governor and presented to the committee at its meeting.

On March 3, staff will attend a Senate Local Government Committee hearing on the Williamson Act. Staff will report back on this and other developments at the Land Use and Housing Committee meeting.

Approved by:

Mike McKeever
Executive Director

MM:RS:DS:sb
Attachment

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Williamson Act Inventory, SACOG Region

October 20, 2009

Current Williamson Act Acreage

	<u>El Dorado</u>	<u>Placer</u>	<u>Sacramento</u>	<u>Sutter</u>	<u>Yolo</u>	<u>Total Acres</u>
Grazing	25,178	1,619	83,150	12,435	109,382	231,763
Local Importance	5,951	25,750	9,026	0	31,375	72,102
Local Potential	0	0	0	0	13,377	13,377
Prime	348	4,069	58,367	34,287	190,638	287,709
Statewide Importance	406	1,648	23,519	13,793	11,127	50,493
Unique	1,048	8,971	7,259	2,186	34,839	54,304
Other Lands	2,267	2,401	5,897	520	19,382	30,467
Total Acres	35,199	44,458	187,218	63,220	410,120	740,214

Approximate Subvention Value

	<u>El Dorado</u>	<u>Placer</u>	<u>Sacramento</u>	<u>Sutter</u>	<u>Yolo</u>	<u>Total</u>
	\$42,000	\$50,000	\$500,000	\$270,000	\$1,100,000	\$1,962,000

Williamson Act Non-Renewal

	<u>El Dorado</u>	<u>Placer</u>	<u>Sacramento</u>	<u>Sutter</u>	<u>Yolo</u>	<u>Total Acres</u>
Grazing	1,812	141	7,093	0	3,943	12,989
Local Importance	237	9,548	312	0	1,227	11,324
Local Potential	0	0	0	0	737	737
Prime	0	1,814	2,494	0	8,750	13,058
Statewide Importance	0	623	1,921	0	725	3,269
Unique	0	1,611	896	0	1,220	3,726
Other Lands	31	543	115	2	418	1,109
Total Acres	2,081	14,279	12,830	2	17,019	46,210
(% of current acreage)	6%	32%	7%	0%	4%	6%

Williamson Act Acreage - Non-Renewal

	<u>El Dorado</u>	<u>Placer</u>	<u>Sacramento</u>	<u>Sutter</u>	<u>Yolo</u>	<u>Total Acres</u>
Grazing	23,366	1,478	76,057	12,435	105,439	218,775
Local Importance	5,714	16,202	8,714	0	30,148	60,778
Local Potential	0	0	0	0	12,640	12,640
Prime	348	2,255	55,873	34,287	181,888	274,651
Statewide Importance	406	1,025	21,598	13,793	10,402	47,224
Unique	1,048	7,361	6,364	2,186	33,620	50,578
Other Lands	2,236	1,858	5,782	518	18,964	29,358
Total Acres	33,118	30,180	174,387	63,218	393,101	694,004

NOTE: Yuba County does not participate in the Williamson Act program.