



Connections

August 2008

Ag Tours Set for Fall

Following the success of the Yuba-Sutter Agricultural Tour, dates are set for Yolo, El Dorado and Placer counties tours.

On Thursday, September 18 in **Yolo County**, the tour will feature agriculture and mitigation site visits, a locally grown lunch, and presentations from residents, staff and elected officials. The tour will also cover the county's unique general plan, initiatives for local products at area schools, and small-town infill projects.

Later this fall, tours are set for **El Dorado County** on Friday, October 24 and Thursday, November 13 in **Placer County**. More information will be available closer to the tours.

For information contact Monica Hernández at (916) 340-6237 or mhernandez@sacog.org.

What Makes a "Certified" Farmers' Market?

Ever wondered what the "certified" in California Certified Farmers' Market means? Farmers' markets have become a win for farmers and consumers: consumers get a guarantee they are buying fresh, locally-grown produce (within a 100-mile radius), and returns a greater share of the proceeds directly to farmers, helping to sustain local agriculture.

Producers undergo a farm inspection by the state Department of Food and Agriculture, certifying that the producer can sell their produce at a local market.

The certification of the farmers' market

exempts the farmer from having to meet the state's packing, labeling, and shipping requirements for the produce being sold at that market. The exemption was created in a 1977 regulation and helps small farmers increase their income by making farmers' markets more accessible. This regulation also helped begin the rise of farmers' markets in the state.

The certification process involves plenty of fees for both the farmers and operators, but farmers' markets are a viable part of our agricultural economy, seen by the growth in success of farmers' markets in our region.

Crop Data Collection

The University of California's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR) was selected to assist SACOG in developing a crop inventory for the six-county region. UCANR contains both the Cooperative Extension program to advise farmers and the University of California's

Kearney Agricultural Center who will lead the collection project.

Researchers are reviewing satellite imagery against field surveys to develop a field-level crop geographic information system for our region. This information will be used to develop the economic analysis tools for RUCS.

Land Use

Since June, SACOG staff has met with county staff in the six-county region to talk about rural land use issues. A working paper that highlights these issues for each county will be prepared this month and posted on the SACOG website in a wiki.

Much like the collaborative encyclopedia Wikipedia, anyone will be able to view or comment on material. The wiki will be a tool to engage all interested parties throughout the RUCS project.

After the rural land use papers are posted, SACOG will host a regional public workshop on rural land use issues in late September. Look for more details next month.

For more information contact RUCS project manager David Shabazian, (916) 340-6231 or dshabazian@sacog.org.

See the RUCS wiki and more at
www.sacog.org/rucs

Photos from Sutter-Yuba Ag Tour

Top: Crop dusting in Robbins

Middle: Taylor Brothers Farms prune processing

Bottom: Sacramento City Councilmember Lauren Hammond on a tractor



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Regulatory Update

SACOG is in an advantageous position with federal partners to accomplish some key victories. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Secretary Woodley has been a proponent of RUCS, and is working closely with SACOG staff and other federal partners to establish funding and policy pathways that support Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) in the region. Other recent highlights:

USACE/EPA REGL 08-02

Adopted in June, this regulatory letter allows a project proponent to accept the Corps' claim for jurisdiction of waters of the U.S. in exchange for an expedited permit process.

USACE/EPA Final Mitigation Rule

The new rule changes where and how mitigation is required, but does not change when it is required. It also examines opportunities for investment incentives, out-of-kind mitigation and other features.

Water Policy

There has been increasing interest over the State Water Quality Control Board's movement to assume jurisdiction of features which, subsequent to *Rappanos and Carabell vs. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*, are no longer under the Corps' control.

Flood Control

There is growing concern that U.S. EPA may shut down an authorized and appropriated flood control project on the southern portion of the Mississippi River, under its 404(c) authority. This would set a troubling precedent. A regional and national coalition supports an exemption streamlines regulatory actions on authorized projects.

RUCS project consultant Stacey McKinley will continue to regularly update the Land Use & Housing Committee.

Transportation

Building on issues identified in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan for 2035, staff has begun to solicit stakeholder input on the rural transportation topic leading into a working group meeting in November.

Feedback is also being gathered through regular standing transportation advisory committees, including the Regional Planning Partnership, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and Transit Coordinating Committee.

SACOG staff has polled traffic engineering staff at local agencies in the region for all traffic counts taken during the spring, and to discuss gaps in count coverage in agricultural and forested areas of the region. Staff is also working on a contract with a traffic counting firm to take new traffic counts starting in September 2008, continuing through spring 2009. Stay tuned for status updates and early findings at RUCS workshops and in *Connections* starting in November.

Infrastructure & Fiscal Modeling

Staff has met with a few smaller jurisdictions around the region, discussing how the IMPACS model and fiscal analysis work could be beneficial to their planning efforts. One jurisdiction, in the midst of a general plan update, thought the outputs on infrastructure costs could be beneficial as a public outreach tool, while another felt the tools would be very useful in evaluating larger greenfield development proposals.

Additional meetings with jurisdictions will provide more information on the modeling work planned for RUCS.

The next step for this work is to look at additional functionality that can be built into the models, which may include estimating operating and maintenance costs, and sales and property tax revenues; and joining them to one another in a meaningful and user-friendly manner.