



# Connections

September 2008

## Yolo Ag Tour Sept. 18

SACOG will lead the second tour of agricultural and open space lands on Thursday, September 18 in **Yolo County**.

Looking at the challenges and opportunities in our rural communities, the tour will feature agriculture and mitigation site visits, a locally grown lunch, and presentations from residents, staff, activists and elected officials.

**The tour will start at UC Davis International House at 10 a.m., following a 9 a.m. Board of Directors meeting. The tour is scheduled to end at 4:30 p.m. in Davis.**

Next month, a tour is set for El Dorado County on Friday, **October 24**. A Placer County tour will take place Thursday, **November 13**.

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

## The Market for Local Food

One topic the RUCS project is addressing is the growing market for local food. Direct sales of local food help increase farm revenue by eliminating the middleman, decrease emissions by reducing the distance food travels, and provide a better tasting product. SACOG is working with Valley Vision and Agriculture in Metropolitan Regions (AMR) at UC Berkeley to analyze the market potential for local food and engage a working group on the topic.

Valley Vision's role builds on the partnership formed during the Blueprint and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Not only will Valley Vision's long history of civic engagement help the Local Market Working Group develop innovations and strategies for local markets, their work in open space and land conservation issues and on the Tri-Valley Conservancy's

Strategic Plan—a plan for land conservation and agriculture viability in the Livermore area—provide background and knowledge directly related to the RUCS project.

AMR's mission is to understand the interface of rural and urban areas, particularly the values, economies and policies impacting the landscape. AMR staff was part of a team that developed the Urban Edge Agricultural Parks Toolkit, a guide for landowners considering sustainable agriculture as a component of planned developments. AMR and the American Farmland Trust recently published the *San Francisco Foodshed Assessment*, highlighting the challenges and opportunities to supplying the Bay Area with locally grown food. This work will help address similar local market questions for the Sacramento region.

## Life in the Slow (Food) Lane

San Francisco was home to the Slow Food annual conference over the Labor Day weekend. The four-day Slow Food Nation event highlighted challenges in global food systems, looking toward examples of regional and local markets and a renewed appreciation for the culture and traditions of food to reconnect consumers with their producers and improves the health and economic sustainability of the entire community. Direct examples abounded as farms, ranches and restaurants that serve the Bay Area displayed their products in the farmers market, food bazaar, and taste pavilion during the event.

The conference kicked off with a panel discussion about the world food crisis broadly defined as a community's disconnection with food systems and

agriculture and in some cases, its inability to feed itself. This discussion set the stage for numerous sessions that followed where experts honed in on public health issues, environmental stewardship, climate change, agriculture in school curriculums, re-localizing food systems, investing in local food systems, clean (chemical-free) food, fair wages to workers and a fair price to farmers, and putting policies in place to set these changes in motion.

Locally, Slow Food has taken root in Placer, Yolo and Sacramento counties where chapters or "convivia" have been established. Members share an appreciation for growing and preparing their own food and sharing that experience with their communities.

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## Life in the Slow Lane (continued)

Slow Food is a "non-profit, eco-gastronomic member-supported organization that was founded in 1989 to counteract fast food and fast life, the disappearance of local food traditions and people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices affect the rest of the world."

For more information visit [www.sierrafresh.com](http://www.sierrafresh.com), [www.slowfoodyolo.com](http://www.slowfoodyolo.com) or [www.slowfoodsacramento.com](http://www.slowfoodsacramento.com)



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## Regulatory Update

### **Water Quality (401) Permit**

The California Water Quality Control Board is preparing to augment their water quality (401) permit to address perceived regulatory gaps subsequent to recent Supreme Court rulings related to the Federal Clean Water Act (404). A study funded by U.S. EPA is currently under review. Water Quality Control Board Member Charlie Hoppin has asked SACOG to review the findings and provide alternatives to the Water Quality Control Board and its members. The implications of a poorly crafted or over-reaching re-tool of the 401 permit could have serious ramifications to Blueprint and RUCS implementation.

### **Carbon Sequestration**

On **September 9**, SACOG staff and Board members are meeting with greenhouse gas modelers currently measuring carbon sequestration opportunities on rice lands. This study, partially funded through a grant jointly

awarded to the California Rice Commission and Defenders of Wildlife, has the potential to inform the state of sequestration opportunities and give an economic boost to the industry. The modelers will also discuss the potential to expand the model to cover other commodities in our region.

### **Placer County Conservation Plan**

The proposed mapping of the Placer County Conservation Plan (PCCP) is expected to be presented to the Board of Supervisors as early as **September 23**. Should the Board adopt the map, the PCCP will cross a critical threshold and begin the process of fine-tuning and negotiating with federal and state regulatory agencies. SACOG has been in a support role and will continue to work with the ad hoc committee through the process of negotiation, potential funding and overall strategy. The region's Habitat Conservation Plans are a critical link in the RUCS framework.

## Transportation

Rural areas often face critical funding and mobility challenges. SACOG's advisory committees have identified five key areas for rural transportation (see box).

One rural transportation challenge is the increasing demand for rural transit operators to provide non-emergency medical transportation services. While urban dwellers can choose from a variety of transportation options, including fixed-route or demand response transit service, walking, or taxis, rural residents have far fewer options. Fixed-route and demand-response transit is very limited in outlying areas, and walking is often impractical. In addition, major medical centers tend to be in urban or suburban locations far from rural households.

A recent study found that transit-dependent rural seniors make 15

## Rural Transportation Topics

- Mobility
- Transportation Safety
- Operations & Maintenance
- Economic Vitality
- Travel Behavior

percent fewer trips to the doctor because they have fewer transportation options.

With an aging rural population on the horizon, new transportation options for non-emergency medical appointments may be critical to helping seniors maintain their health and livelihood. Innovations to address this challenge and many others are coming forward through case studies on successful regional and national rural transportation efforts.

For more information contact Matt Carpenter at [mcarpenter@sacog.org](mailto:mcarpenter@sacog.org).