



Connections

May 2009

Regional Food System Collaborative

Valley Vision is convening a meeting of leaders involved in improving food access in the Sacramento region.

The six-county SACOG region has many different organizations and agencies working on issues related to the availability of fresh food throughout our community, especially for those who are underserved. The breadth of this project includes the local food system, from production to consumption. Stakeholders include representatives from the emergency food system, local growers, representatives from public health departments, WIC and food stamp agencies, agriculture commissioners, and nutrition education community-based organizations.

The meeting will take place on **June 2**, from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., at Sierra Health Foundation, 1331 Garden Highway in Sacramento.

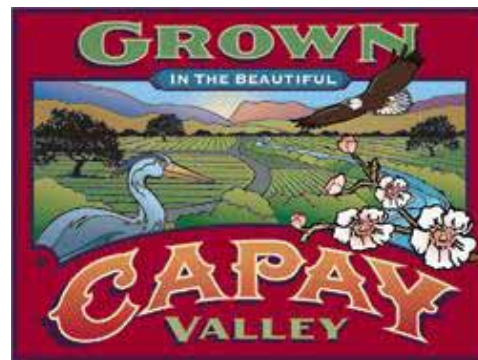
For more information, contact Valley Vision at (916) 325-1630.

What's an Ag District?

Agricultural districts are special geographic areas where agriculture is encouraged and protected—a comprehensive response to the challenges facing farmers in developing communities. To maintain the

land base for agriculture, some agricultural district programs protect farmland from annexation and eminent domain. Some increase restrictions on minimum lot sizes, buffer requirements, and non-agricultural development. Many also require that state agencies limit new infrastructure, such as roads and sewers.

Agricultural districts are typically based on criteria such as soils, topographical



features, location, lands currently in agricultural easements or preserve contracts and development densities.

The term “agriculture” may include grazing lands, depending on the context (in the RUCS project, references to “agriculture” include grazing lands) may be considered in the formation of agricultural districts, or grazing districts could even be formed.

Yolo County established the Clarksburg Agricultural District in January 2008 and is currently evaluating Capay Valley and Dunnigan Hills as future districts.

Transportation Safety Technical Assistance

In 2007, 61 percent of SACOG-region fatal collisions occurred in rural areas, despite the fact that just 13 percent of the population lives in rural areas. Regardless of fault, unforgiving road conditions and incompatible traffic patterns can turn a crash into a fatality.

In the SACOG region from 1998 to 2007, 34 percent of rural fatal collisions were hit-object collisions and 16 percent were broadside collisions. Apart from high-risk driving behaviors such as speeding and driving under the influence, the most common violations associated with fatal rural collisions were improper turning and automobile right-of-way. Time of day also significantly affects the severity of accidents. Twenty-nine percent of fatal collisions occurred at night without street lights, while only 16 percent occurred at night with street lights.

These types of collisions are avoidable with preventative and routine maintenance, roadside safety measures and intelligent transportation systems (ITS) solutions such as a collision counter-measure system that alerts drivers in rural areas when cross traffic is ahead.

Local agencies often do not have the funding to maintain, let alone enhance, the

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Technical Assistance (continued)

disproportionate number of road miles in their care. Rural areas have 48 percent of the region's road miles, compared to 41 percent in urban areas and 10 percent in small urban areas.

As part of its RUCS planning efforts, SACOG has produced a sample "safety report" for each county in the region, containing safety data similar to that found in this article. These safety reports are an example of the type of technical assistance SACOG offers its members as they work toward finding roadway safety solutions at the local level.

Customized safety data can be a critical component in securing funding from grants like the High Risk Rural Roads (HR3) Program. Through its technical assistance program, SACOG hopes to help bolster grant applications and inform public policy decisions that will make our rural roadways safer.

For more information on technical assistance contact Christine Scherman at cscherman@sacog.org or (916) 340-6262.

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Stay current on rural-urban issues
at www.sacog.org/rucs

Grants Available

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education are currently offering a variety of grants. A few are highlighted below. For more information visit: www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/funding.cfm and wsare.usu.edu/grants

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program

Recipient must be a collaborative, state, tribal, local, or regionally-based network or partnership of public or private entities. Application deadline is **May 13**.

Community Food Projects

Grants can be done for food access and planning.

Food Access: meet the food needs of low-income people; increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; or promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues.

Planning: meet specific food and agriculture needs for infrastructure improvement and development; planning for long-term solutions; create innovative

marketing activities that mutually benefit agricultural producers and low-income consumers, or to establish and operate a national information and education clearinghouse on community food security. Application deadline is **May 13**.

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program

This program offers many grants for research, education, extensions and integrated research, extension, and education grants that address key problems in sustaining all components of agriculture, including farm efficiency and profitability, ranching, renewable energy, forestry (both urban and agroforestry), aquaculture, rural communities and entrepreneurship, human nutrition, food safety, biotechnology, and conventional breeding.

The Agricultural Prosperity for Small and Medium-sized Farms program offers grants to enhance interactions between the economic and environmental components important to the long-term viability, competitiveness and efficiency of small and medium-sized farms. Deadline is **June 5**.



Regional Inventory Receives ARRA Funds

On **May 1**, SACOG received notice that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has allocated \$500,000—10 percent of their overall regulatory funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)—to continued investment in the SACOG/Corps Six-County Aquatic Resources Inventory.

Beyond the benefit to the region that this investment will provide, it will also provide benefits of timeliness and transparency set out in the ARRA, the federal economic stimulus bill signed in February. ARRA also mandates that the Corps establish contracts with local environmental consultants to conduct the work which is funded with these dollars.

The Scope of Work is currently being revised to reflect this latest investment.

SACOG consultant Stacey McKinley is also helping to facilitate efforts initiated by the Corps and U.S. EPA to bring teams made up of their top policy makers to Sacramento the week of **June 8**, to work on further development of the project and the partnership. The Corps' goal is to involve in both a policy and fiduciary capacity their sister federal agencies to ensure a well-supported and fully funded project. SACOG will be an active partner in these discussions.

SACOG received \$200,000 in January to start this project. The first stage includes data assessment and procurement. Phase two will be to categorize the data, followed by phase three, qualification. For more information contact Stacey McKinley at smckinley@sacog.org.

Sacramento Area Council of Governments