



# Connections

November 2009

## Sacramento County Ag Tour

On October 15, members of the SACOG Board of Directors, local staff and representatives from state and federal legislative offices spent a day exploring agricultural practices in rural (and urban) Sacramento County. This tour was the final in a series that covered all counties within the SACOG region.

The tour began in Sacramento at Produce Express, a produce distributor. Produce Express is working closely with small farmers in the region to create Restaurant Supported Agriculture (RSA). RSA helps local farms get their product in restaurants on a regular schedule or work with chefs to grow specialty products.

The second stop on the tour was at Soil Born Farms, a 40-acre operation along the American River Parkway

**continued on page 2**



*Last-of-the-season heirloom tomatoes waiting for distribution at Produce Express*

## Yolo County Agricultural Mitigation Ordinance

In addition to general plan policies that support the protection of agricultural land, Yolo County also has adopted an Agricultural Mitigation Ordinance. Similar to many other agricultural mitigation requirements, the ordinance mandates that all projects that result in a permanent loss of either farmland and/or habitat are required to mitigate an equal amount of land.

A unique component to Yolo County's ordinance is that it also requires agricultural conservation easements be located within two miles of the

development that is being mitigated. The purpose of this is to give first priority protection to lands close to urban areas as they are seen as more at risk of conversion.

Another potentially unique component to Yolo County's mitigation requirement is in the county's draft general plan, which includes an action to verify that easements used for mitigation require the landowner to maintain adequate water rights to support agricultural productivity on the land.

For more information, contact Kacey Lizon at (916) 340-6265 or [klizon@sacog.org](mailto:klizon@sacog.org).

## Rural Traffic Safety in Yolo County



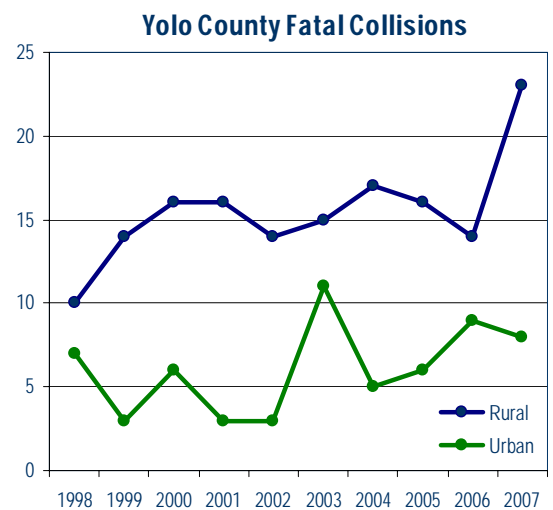
Nationally, 23 percent of the population lives in rural areas; yet, in 2006, 56 percent of the 42,642 traffic fatalities nationwide occurred in rural areas. California safety statistics reflect a similar phenomenon. In 2006, only 7 percent of the population lived in rural areas, but rural areas accounted for 37 percent of the state's 4,236 traffic fatalities.

Having national and statewide data can help start discussions about roadway safety in rural areas, but more detailed safety data is necessary to find safety solutions at the local level. SACOG staff has compiled sample safety statistics from 1998 to 2007 to help bolster grant applications and inform policy decisions to improve rural roadway safety in our region.

### Rural and Urban Fatal Collisions

Rural Yolo County has generally hovered in the range of 14 to 17 fatalities per year. However, the outlier years of 1998 and 2007 had the lowest and highest fatality total, with 10 fatalities in 1998 and 23 in 2007. Urban areas have seen more variation, ranging from three to 11 fatal collisions per year and averaging about six.

**continued on page 2**



## Rural Traffic (cont.)

The most common type of rural fatal or severe collision was collision with a fixed object, while the most common type of non-fatal and non-severe injury (other) collision was collision with another motor vehicle. Hit-object collisions accounted for an equal percentage of total collisions, but rear ends and sideswipes were far more common in other collisions.

### Causes of Collisions

Improper turning and unsafe speed were the most common causes, each accounting for 26 percent of total collisions. Driving or bicycling under the influence accounted for over 30 percent of fatal or severe collisions and 11 percent of other collisions. Unsafe speed caused 15 percent of fatal or severe collisions and 26 percent of other collisions.

For the full report, or to request technical assistance, contact Christine Scherman at (916) 340-6262 or [cscherman@sacog.org](mailto:cscherman@sacog.org).

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## Sacramento County Ag Tour (continued)

that focuses on bringing fresh, organic food to the urban area that surrounds it.

Soil Born works directly with the local community creating access to fresh health foods and teaching sustainable growing practices.

During the tour, participants heard from Sacramento County staff on topics including agritourism policy planning, pesticide use and management, and unique outreach to immigrant farmers in the south county area.

The tour then headed south to HAVE Angus Ranch and listened to presentations from a variety of agricultural stakeholders. Charlotte Mitchell, executive director of the Sacramento County Farm Bureau, spoke to the need for supportive land use policies to preserve agricultural lands. Rabbi Davis Wechsler-Azen, CEO of Fresh Producers, talked about the need to



*Concord grapes*

increase access to fresh and healthy foods to lower-income youth. Students from the Florin High School Ag TECH Academy and 4-H talked to the group about the academic and social benefits of the two programs and trying to connect urban youth with agricultural professions.

After lunch, the tour visited the Tollenaar Ranch and Dairy in Galt, a 300-acre ranch that also has a methane digester to manage dairy operation waste and produce electricity, resulting in additional income for owners Jon and Tami Tollenaar.



*Shawn Harrison of Soil Born Farms speaks to tour participants about their operation along the American River Parkway.*

One interesting innovation led by the Sacramento County Farm Bureau is the Sacramento Grow & Buy Local initiative. Libby O'Sullivan, a UC Davis graduate student, and other researchers from the university are analyzing the county's market opportunities for local growers and developing strategies for more viable agriculture.

The tour also stopped at the Cosumnes River Preserve, the historic town of Locke, a cold storage facility and a U-Pick farm.

For more information on the RUCS project, please go to:  
**[www.sacog.org/rucs](http://www.sacog.org/rucs)**.



*A methane digester (center) uses methane gas from dairy cow waste (right) to power a generator that feeds electricity back into the grid. This innovation provides the Tollenaar Dairy with a stable source of income, a welcome addition given the fluctuating price of milk and other agricultural products. The intake pond (foreground) is designed to handle additional waste, such as food scraps, for the digester.*