



Local Agency Formation Commission
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Date: March 18, 2015
To: LAFCO Commissioners
From: ^{BN} Bill Nicholson, Executive Officer
Re: LAFCO Agricultural Mitigation Policy Summary
(Agenda Item VII.A)

At the January 21, 2015, Commission meeting, Commissioner Kelsey requested that the Executive Officer provide an update regarding the status of agricultural mitigation policies for LAFCOs. Commissioner Kelsey also referenced the work of the previous "LAFCO Agricultural Policy Subcommittee" formed by the Commission in 2006.

As background, previous research by the Agricultural Policy Subcommittee into the policies adopted by other LAFCOs resulted in a presentation to the Commission on December 6, 2007. At that time, several LAFCOs had policies that addressed the timing and location for the annexation of prime agricultural land for urban development, while Yolo LAFCO required mitigation for the loss of agricultural land through the dedication of farmland conservation easements at a 1:1 ratio – one acre of conservation easement area established in the County for each acre of farmland annexed. The Commission received the Subcommittee's report, but did not give direction to pursue any specific policy or mitigation approach.

Based on a survey recently completed by Ventura LAFCO, four LAFCOs have some level of mitigation adopted as policy. Besides Yolo LAFCOs requirement for 1:1 mitigation, San Luis Obispo and Stanislaus LAFCOs have adopted similar policies referencing mitigation at a 1:1 ratio of easement area to land annexed, yet they also provide alternatives (removal of land from the existing sphere of influence, or a voter-approved urban growth boundary). Santa Clara LAFCO encourages cities to adopt agricultural mitigation programs, but it has not adopted a mandatory mitigation policy. Other LAFCOs have adopted criteria to evaluate impacts and justification for considering approval of a proposal that is expected to result in the conversion or loss of agricultural land.

Merced LAFCO Commissioners may be aware that with adoption of the updated 2030 Merced County General Plan in December 2013, the Merced County Board of Supervisors adopted an agricultural mitigation policy using a similar 1:1 ratio as Yolo LAFCO. This policy applies to the conversion of productive agricultural land to non-agricultural uses in the unincorporated portions of the County. The policy also encourages the County to work with LAFCO and the cities in the County to adopt similar policies to establish a consistent standard countywide.

Requested Action

This item is for Commission information only, no action is requested.