# Appendix G POTENTIAL STRATEGY FROM NOVEMBER 8, 1999 BOARD RESOLUTION IMPLEMENTATION STEPS FOR AGRICULTURE

- A. Assist Placer County farmers by developing a strong local product identity and by promoting farmers' markets
- B. Assist with the marketing of locally-grown produce

Preliminary Approach to Implementation (of A and B) (Input from Roger Ingram, Joanne Neft)

- 1. Placer Grown and other local agricultural promotion groups need more funding (e.g. grants, advertising in a newsletter, short or longer-term County funding). Placer Grown should hire a marketing person/fundraiser on salaried basis.
- 2. Placer Grown and other local associations/cooperatives should focus marketing on the following entities who will value the quality, freshness etc. of local-grown produce:
  - Restaurants (especially "quality" or high-end restaurants)
  - Large local employers who purchase food (e.g. Hewlett-Packard, Del Webb). These could contract for regular delivery of Placer produce to their plant sites
  - Placer County schools, hospitals and the County of Placer complex (Dewitt Center could have a farm stand).
- 3. The agricultural community could institute a Legacy supported "farm stand" program on major country roads through farm country, selling seasonal products (either attended or on "honor system") (similar to El Dorado County's "Apple Hill" or "Sonoma Farm Trails").
- 4. More farm stands or markets (similar to Ikeda's, but with specific emphasis on local-grown products) in the I-80 corridor and adjacent to the freeway, targeted at locals and transients (Tahoe skiers and other vacationers). Newcastle would be a logical hub for this type of marketing.
- 5. Regular farmers' markets in all major cities (especially Roseville, Lincoln, Auburn, Loomis, Newcastle (one is opening). Food stalls/displays should clearly identify the Placer Grown label (or other) and logo presentation of the products is important in establishing consumer identity and loyalty.
- 6. Flower "u-pick" concessions could be opened in flower-growing areas.
- 7. The State Office of Economic Development could provide funding to open more small neighborhood markets featuring Placer Grown products.

- 8. Entry into large grocery chain markets (e.g. BelAir, Raley's, Ralphs, Safeway etc.) may be slow because these markets depend on a guaranteed weekly volume of each type of produce and are reluctant to devote shelf space to a less predictable product, even if it has premium qualities. However, we can examine the approach of Sonoma Select in marketing to the large chains. This is having a degree of success. Also, some of the chains (e.g. Raley's) buy from local growers when they can get fresh, seasonal produce such as sweet corn, strawberries etc.) Similar to Select Sonoma County a useful approach would be to market the non-perishable products (e.g. jams, jellies, syrups, dried fruit (peaches, pears, persimmons), Christmas baskets and rice bouquets) to these large chain stores first before fresh produce.
- 9. A major marketing effort should be undertaken in neighboring Sacramento County.
- 10. Review County rules and regulations of commercial operations on agricultural lands. For example, rules/regulations affecting wineries, produce stands, picnic areas etc. should refine Zoning Ordinance standards to reflect the scale of the land use.
- C. Educate the public regarding the special values of locally grown crops
  Preliminary Approach to Implementation: (Input from Roger Ingram, Joanne Neft).
  - 1. Advertising of Farmer's Markets and places where Placer Grown products are featured in **local newspapers and newspaper inserts**. Advertising should include the history of agriculture in Placer County (e.g. that in 1923, 66 million pounds of fruit were grown and shipped from the County).
  - 2. Food Fairs and festivals showcasing local products
  - 3. **Radio spots on local stations** announcing availability of fresh season products (something like the style of Joe Carcione or Narsai David in the Bay Area, but targeted at local products and the local market).
  - 4. School programs to educate children and young adults about the values of healthful, locally grown food. These could include teaching young people about farming by planting a sample of row crops on school property, growing, harvesting and preparing meals from the crops in cooking classes.
  - 5. The County Health Department could play a pro-active promotional role in educating the public about the positive values of local sustainable and organic agriculture in relation to health standards for sanitation and nutritional value of foods.

- 6. Local products should be promoted both in and outside of Placer County. A brochure could be used as promotional action to encourage new, high value agricultural opportunities in the County (e.g. wine grapes, oranges, nut crops etc.)
- 7. Various informational services should be used to inform the public of the reasons to support local agriculture (i.e. buy local and keep agriculture in the County).

## D. Utilize the Agricultural Commissioner's office as an agricultural advocate with the Board of Supervisors

Preliminary Approach to Implementation: (Input from Roger Ingram, Loren Clark, Joanne Neft, Bob Roan)

- 1. This is already in the works. Representatives from this office are meeting on a weekly basis to discuss the economics of farming and have regular communications with the Board.
- 2. Increase the staffing of the Agricultural Commissioner's office to participate in program development and implementation.
- 3. The Agricultural Commissioner's office should help farmers develop creative ways to market their own products.
- 4. Farmers should be encouraged to diversify their crop range to maximize year-round income from farming. For example, diversification could include the introduction of aquaculture (fish farming) on rice lands that are already a form of aquaculture. The market could probably support greater plantings of Satsuma mandarin oranges.
- 5. The County Board of Supervisors needs to lend more support to the Agricultural Commissioner's Office and use the County Agricultural Commissioner as they use the County Planning Commission (i.e. as extension of staff). This may require setting specific actions by the Agricultural Commission.

# E. Establish neighborhood agricultural "districts" with specific policies that are locally applicable

Preliminary Approach to Implementation: (Input from Loren Clark, Bob Roan)

- 1. This requires research on the part of the Planning Department
- 2. The agricultural community can provide input as to what areas have unique agricultural characteristics that need to be preserved and to make sure that the General Plan recognizes these areas as unique.
- 3. Use the GIS database and existing knowledge to identify existing neighborhoods (e.g. areas of similar crops or potential. Once "areas" have been identified, use the County parcel map to send letters to determine interest in collaboration.

County could offer incentives to landowners willing to participate in neighborhood agricultural districts (e.g. offer Williamson Act contracts to small parcels if they were aggregated; the minimum parcel size for Williamson Act contracts is 10 acres on prime land).

# F. Encourage neighboring agricultural landowners/producers to collaborate on easements/land preservation

Preliminary Approach to Implementation: (Input from Roger Ingram)

- 1. This collaboration to protect larger aggregations of land may be an outgrowth of the U.C. Cooperative Extension survey (Roger Ingram, survey). Some of the larger landowners have already indicated that they are interested in selling easements.
- 2. Some combination of the U.C. Cooperative Extension, Farm Bureau, and Agricultural Commissioner's office should develop materials, in part based on the survey, to deal with farmers' issues. These could be distributed by mail to farmers or available to be picked up either at the relevant offices, or on the Internet.

#### G. Assist farmers with tax planning

Preliminary Approach to Implementation: (Input from Jim Elias, Roger Ingram, Erik Vink, American Farmland Trust, John Gamper, California Farm Bureau)

- 1. Tax planning divides into current planning and estate planning.
- 2. Basic education of the farmers as to what their options are: up-to-date materials available by mail or on line, prepared by experts in current law and accounting. (Funding provided by California Farm Bureau, Agricultural Commissioners' office, Placer Legacy etc.) Options include Farmland Security Zone (super Williamson Act), creation of easements through cash sales, donation, or a combination). (See further discussion under Williamson Act, below)
- 3. Making sure farmers have access to individual tax counselors, accountants etc. who can evaluate their specific situation and make recommendations.
- 4. County (or others) hire lobbyists to promote legislative changes at state and/or federal level more favorable to farm preservation. The estate tax law is especially punitive to holders of large parcels.
- 5. American Farmland Trust (AFT) is part of a coalition with lobbyists in Washington, D.C. which are tracking ongoing opportunities to introduce changes in tax law more favorable to farmers each time a major tax bill is introduced in Congress. The California Estate Tax was abolished in the late 70s or early 80s.

- 6. There is a monthly newsletter specifically directed at tax information of value to farmers to which Placer Legacy, the County and individual farmers should subscribe: the title is "Farm Tax Saver" and this can be ordered by e-mailing to Trenna R. Grabowski (the editor) at grabeau@midwest.net (Tel) 618-435-4020.
- 7. The main opposition to changing the federal inheritance tax to be more favorable to farmers is the National Building Industry Association, who is lobbying to keep a steady supply of farmland available for new housing construction. This conflict must be resolved before productive changes can be made in the inheritance tax laws affecting farmers.
- 8. Development of literature specific to the tax planning issues for farming in Placer County.
- 9. County conducts annual workshops to discuss tax planning alternatives. The first one is already budgeted for 2000.

# H. Implement and promote the Williamson Act to ensure that the needs of farming operations are protected

Preliminary Approach to Implementation: (Input from Diana Stralberg, Loren Clark, Roger Ingram)

- 1. Current (1999) utilization of the Williamson Act is 49% of prime farmland but only 37% is active with no non-renewal filed. Of all mapped farmland, 12% is active Williamson Act and 10% is active, with no non-renewal filed.
- 2. Farmers and ranchers need to be educated on provisions of the new Farmland Security Zone (FSZ), and how it affects them individually. Provides greater tax benefits than conventional Williamson Act, but term of contract is 20 years and is non-cancelable. The legislation and a thorough explanation of how it works, including an economic impact study example, are available on the California Farm Bureau Federation's web site (*cfbf.com/land*).
- 3. Placer County has adopted the Farmland Security Zone but there are no examples of it being implemented yet. The reason for this lack of enrollment should be researched because it could indicate farmers in general are unwilling to commit to keep their land in agriculture for as long as 20 years, even for the additional tax advantages offered by the FSZ over the traditional Williamson Act. Bob Roan believes that farmers' unwillingness to utilize the Williamson Act or the FMZ may stem from their lack of assurance that the County will protect their agricultural districts through the land/use zoning process.
- 4. Use of alternative forms of the Williamson Act is part of overall fiscal/tax planning tools available to farmers.
- 5. Utilize the Agricultural Commissioner's office to promote greater utilization of

either the original Williamson Act or the new Farmland Security Zone.

# I. Make the existing Right-To-Farm Ordinance more useful to the farmer by educating the public and by intervening in legal challenges subject to right-to-farm Preliminary Approach to Implementation: (Input from Roger Ingram)

- 1. The UC Cooperative Extension Service (R. Ingram) is already working on this. R. Ingram has prepared a brochure on the County's Right-to-Farm Ordinance and how it works. Notice of the Right-to-Farm provisions were to be distributed to all of the unincorporated area of Placer County. The brochure could be made more generally available through mass mailing and/or the Web.
- 2. One of the biggest problems is educating the real estate community about the Right-to-Farm Ordinance and how to incorporate right-to-farm agreements into real estate transactions (e.g. for residential sales). Cindy Pecos (Placer Board of Realtors) is taking the lead in educating the real estate community.

### J. Work to make water available at a reasonable price

Preliminary Approach to Implementation: (Input from Roger Ingram, Bob Roan, Nevada Irrigation District, Terry Mayfield, Einar Maisch, Mal Toy, Placer County Water Agency, Brad Arnold, South Sutter Irrigation District).

- 1. Biggest problem is how to get reliable water to Western Placer County. With reliable water, farming is more efficient (greater production on less land). Placer County Water Agency has recent converted some of its surplus water to permanent water which improves the reliability of supply to its agricultural customers.
- 2. One possible mechanism is water trades between agencies (those with a surplus trade with those with a deficit).
- 3. The County has met with the water agencies and now has an understanding of where farmers are getting their water and the limits of the water agencies ability to provide water to both agriculture and urban users. The issue now is to guarantee that water to agriculture will not be curtailed by either conservation pricing or allocation of a much greater proportion as treated water which costs twenty times the raw water cost.
- 4. Surplus water from South Sutter Irrigation District (up to 10,000 acre feet/year) could be used for agriculture or biological conservation purposes under the Placer Legacy Program rather than going to housing development on lands west of Fiddyment Road.
- 5. New development competing with agriculture should be served by a combination of the following, rather than by diminishing the supply available to agriculture:

- more conjunctive use of groundwater
- possible increase in water recycling (though most water being recycled now)
- converting open canals to pipelines to reduce evaporation losses
- improve conveyance system to recharge more water during peak runoff and deliver more water in times of peak dry season demand

# K. Develop a program to identify methods to protect agriculturally designated areas from conversion to non-agricultural uses

Preliminary Approach to Implementation: (Input from Loren Clark, Roger Ingram, Bob Roan)

- 1. This general policy needs to be further interpreted in terms of General Plan language and requirements for the Board of Supervisors to make findings before allowing conversion of agricultural areas to non-agricultural uses.
- 2. County already has a zone district called Agricultural Exclusive (AE), but this is not currently used. This zone could be employed to prohibit or discourage noncompatible uses from encroaching on agricultural lands.
- 3. Criteria needs to be developed to designate the most valuable classes of agricultural parcels (e.g. combination of prime soils, permanent water, lack of encroachment by incompatible uses, high crop value etc.)
- 4. R. Ingram states that encroachment of non-compatible uses is more important than size per se in determining whether the land stays in agriculture. High value crops and more experimental methods may allow viable farming on parcels as small as 5 acres or less.
- 5. There is also a component of viable "boutique" farming by part-time farmers who grow high value crops as a second income or "hobby" but have other employment in addition to farming.
- 6. Farming by traditional methods requires larger parcels.

## L. Placer Legacy: Evaluate which lands have multiple values as easements (e.g. riparian, recreational or scenic)

Preliminary Approach to Implementation:

1. This determination will be made by querying the GIS database.

#### M. Placer Legacy: Prioritize lands for possible easement purchase

Preliminary Approach to Implementation: Input from Misty Arias (Sonoma Land Trust)

- 1. Sonoma Land Trust model: Sonoma County passed several ballot measures creating the Sonoma Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and voting in a 1/4 cent sales tax increase for 20 years to pay for easement purchase. So far this has generated \$12 to \$13 million per year for easement purchase in Sonoma County.
- 2. Prioritization criteria include willing sellers (several large landowners have already indicated interest in selling easement), multiple values in addition to agriculture, valuable parcels in particular jeopardy or useful as urban separators, and funds available for easement purchase at the time.