



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

GREG COX  
First District

DIANNE JACOB  
Second District

PAM SLATER  
Third District

RON ROBERTS  
Fourth District

BILL HORN  
Fifth District

**DATE:** August 1, 2001

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**SUBJECT:** PRESERVING AGRICULTURAL OPEN SPACE (District: 2)

**SUMMARY:**

### **Overview**

The recommended actions help expand the County's programs to preserve open space and may generate unanticipated revenue to purchase open space easements. The proposed federal program supported by these actions would provide funding to the County to purchase open space easements on agricultural lands from willing property owners. Such easements would preserve the land as open space, while permitting compatible agricultural uses and financial benefit to the property owner.

### **Recommendation(s)**

#### **SUPERVISOR JACOB:**

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to add the County of San Diego to the list of supporters of the Environmental Defense Fund position paper backing H.R. 2375, the Working Lands Stewardship Act, a position paper endorsed by broad-based coalition representing agricultural, environmental, public policy, and academic organizations.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer and the County's Washington, D.C. representatives to work with the County's federal legislators and other interested parties to support a H.R. 2375, the Working Lands Stewardship Act, with special attention to the "Farmland Protection Program" contained in Title I of the bill.
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer and the County's Washington, D.C. representatives to work with the County's federal legislators and other interested parties, upon the enactment of H.R. 2375, to secure from the Secretary of Agriculture the designation of the County of San Diego as a "priority region" within the "Conservation Corridor Program," as described in Title VIII Section 801(b) of H.R. 2375, to help the County of San Diego obtain federal funding for the voluntary programs contained in the bill that assist interested property owners.
4. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to develop a County program to purchase open space easements on agricultural lands from interested property owners, contingent upon federal funding and the enactment of H.R. 2375, provided that

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participation from property owners is voluntary and that such a program would enable the County to reach specific agreements with individual property owners allowing agricultural uses of the land compatible with both preserving the land as open space and maintaining the use of the land.

5. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to report back to the Board within one hundred-twenty (120) days regarding above directives.

**Fiscal Impact**

There is no fiscal impact related to this proposal.

**BACKGROUND:**

With the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP), the County of San Diego has received national recognition for its conservation efforts. This action furthers the County's role as a conservation leader by taking the first step toward preserving agricultural lands as open space. The regulations governing the majority of open space currently protected under the MSCP prohibits uses of the land other than the maintenance of open space. While this open space preservation has succeeded in preserving thousands of acres, the County can build on this accomplishment by incorporating agricultural land preservation into the County's conservation planning.

Many agricultural uses of land compliment open space preservation and in some instances enhance the viability of the land as a habitat for certain endangered species. The Stephen's kangaroo rat provides an example of this, as it requires a habitat of short grass, and limited grazing offers a cost effective and agriculturally productive means of maintaining this habitat. Other compatible agricultural uses include growing and some forms of ranching.

Today's action seeks to preserve these agricultural lands by supporting a program that enables property owners to voluntarily reach agreements for the County to purchase an open space easement on their property that prevents future development of the land, while permitting agricultural uses of the land compatible with open space and habitat preservation. The easements acquired under such a program would affect *existing* agricultural lands. Nothing in this program would allow agricultural uses on previously acquired or pristine open space but rather would preserve present agricultural uses compatible with open space conservation and protect these lands from future development.

At the same time, these easements would provide the opportunity for farmers and other owners of agricultural land to receive compensation for continuing the present use of their land. This compensation encourages voluntary participation on the part of property owners that will expand the County's conservation efforts and increase the amount of protected open space and habitats in the region. A mutually beneficial link exists between agriculture and conservation, and this financial incentive reinforces this link by giving property owners another option for their land that also conserves precious agricultural resources.

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Federal funding to the County would provide this compensation to property owners. For this reason, this action includes directives for the County to work with its Washington, D.C. representatives and San Diego's congressional delegation to support the Working Lands Stewardship Act with its proposed Farmland Protection Program. This program would help the County continue its conservation leadership by protecting agriculture, open space, and habitats, which will benefit our region and the preservation of its natural resources for future generations.

Today's action adds the County of San Diego to a broad-based coalition supporting this program and also makes the County of San Diego the first local government entity to officially support this measure.

I urge your support.

Respectfully submitted,

DIANNE JACOB  
Supervisor, Second District

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**AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**

**CONCURRENCE(S)**

<b>COUNTY COUNSEL REVIEW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Written disclosure per County Charter § 1000.1 required?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>GROUP/AGENCY FINANCE DIRECTOR</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Requires Four Votes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>GROUP/AGENCY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A

**Other Concurrence(s):** [Click here and type, or type N/A if not applicable]

**ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT:** [Click here and type]

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**AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**  
(continued)

**PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:**

**BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:**

**BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:**

**CONTRACT NUMBER(S):**

**SUBJECT:** PRESERVING AGRICULTURAL OPEN SPACE (District: 2)

**FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**DEPARTMENT:**

**PROGRAM:**

**PROPOSAL:**

	FUTURE YEARS ESTIMATED BUDGET OF PROPOSAL IF ADOPTED				
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
	Budgeted Amount For Proposal	Proposed Change in Budgeted Amount	Proposed Revised Current Year Budget (a+b)	1st Subsequent Year	2nd Subsequent Year
Direct Cost					
Revenue/Other Offset					
<b>NET GENERAL FUND COST</b>					
Staff Years					

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Sources of Revenue/Other Offset for Proposed Change and Subsequent Years:

**Space-Related Impacts:** Will this proposal result in any additional space requirements?  Yes  N/A

**Support/Other Departmental Impacts:**  Yes  N/A

**Remarks:**  Yes  N/A