



Agenda Date: 7/24/2007
Agenda Placement: 9A

NAPA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Letter

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Hillary Gitelman - Director
Conservation, Development & Planning
REPORT BY: John Woodbury, Principal Planner , 259-5933
SUBJECT: Nomination of Priority Conservation Areas

RECOMMENDATION

Director of Conservation, Development and Planning requests approval for County to nominate agricultural and watershed lands within Napa County as a Priority Conservation Area for the Focusing Our Vision initiative sponsored by the Association of Bay Area Governments and others.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) is seeking nominations from local governments and non-profit land conservation organizations for Priority Conservation Areas pursuant to the "Focusing our Vision" multi-agency regional planning initiative. Priority Conservation Areas are areas which contain important agricultural, natural resource, watershed, historic, scenic, cultural, recreational, and/or ecological values and ecosystem functions. The purpose of identifying these areas is to support their long term conservation, and to assist with the targeting of regional public funds which could be available for acquisitions of fee title ownership or conservation easements. While the nomination materials are unclear whether ABAG is seeking nomination of individual sites for acquisition/easements or broader planning areas, County staff believe that all of the County's agricultural and watershed lands (i.e. the County's non-urban areas) meet the criteria articulated and merit consideration as a Priority Conservation Area.

FISCAL IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of

Regulations 15378 (State CEQA Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

"Focusing the Vision" (FOCUS) is a multi-agency, regional planning initiative spearheaded by the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in coordination with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission. The State Coastal Conservancy is also involved, and has indicated their intent to consider the Priority Conservation Area designations developed through the FOCUS process in making at least some of their Proposition 84 grant funding decisions.

As part of the FOCUS Program, local governments were previously asked to nominate Priority Development Areas. As part of the current phase of the program, local governments, tribes, utility district, park and open space districts, non-profit conservation organizations and others are being asked to nominate Priority Conservation Areas. Nominators are encouraged to collaborate and partner with other entities on the nomination of areas. However, due to the short turnaround time for nominations (which are due August 17th), while it is possible to collaborate and coordinate at the staff level, there is insufficient time to develop and obtain policy-level approval of a comprehensive nomination package. Therefore, staff recommends the County focus its nomination on the agricultural and watershed areas of the County, with the rationale that agricultural preservation is a cornerstone of the County's General Plan. The recommendation is to include all lands in the county which are designated Agricultural Resource and Agriculture, Watershed & Open Space on the County's official land use map -- these are the same lands protected by Measure J. Staff believes that nomination of these areas will signal to regional entities the County's desire to avoid urbanization of these areas, and instead focus urban development in the incorporated cities and other existing urbanized areas.

At the same time, the County may wish to indicate its conceptual support for smaller, site-specific Priority Conservation Areas which may be proposed by other local agencies, including the Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District, the Napa County Resource Conservation District and the Napa County Flood Control District. It seems that having these districts generally take the lead in nominating site-specific Priority Conservation Areas is appropriate since these are the entities which would likely be responsible for any acquisitions.

Priority Conservation Areas which the Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District will be considering for nomination are listed below. It is important to note that these are intended to be near-term priorities, e.g. areas which contain lands important for acquisition within the next few years. The list therefore is not a comprehensive identification of areas important to the quality of life in Napa County, but only covers those areas where some level of negotiations with property owners and/or focused planning is underway. It is also important to emphasize that identifying areas as Priority Conservation Areas does not have any regulatory significance, and that acquisitions by the District would only be from willing sellers.

- | Permanent protection and expansion of Skyline Park
- | Permanent protection and development of recreational facilities at Lake Curry
- | Complete the acquisition of Wild Lake Ranch and Duff properties, and other properties in the vicinity of the Palisades and the Oat Hill Mine Trail, and develop recreational facilities including trails and campgrounds.
- | Oak woodland and grazing lands north and east of Lake Berryessa
- | Trail and habitat links connecting Las Posadas State Forest, Lake Hennessey, Rector Reservoir, Milliken Reservoir, Skyline Park and Newell Preserve

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

A . Nomination form

CEO Recommendation: Approve

Reviewed By: Helene Franchi