

CAPAY VALLEY VISION

P r e s e r v i n g a s e n s e o f p l a c e

May 10, 2013

Mr. David Morrison
Deputy Director, Planning & Public Works
292 W. Beamer St
Woodland, CA 95696

Dear Mr. Morrison,

Thank you for giving the Capay Valley Vision Ag Task Force the opportunity to comment on the proposed Yolo County Ag Ordinance update. We spent the past several months working diligently to create comments that would help local ag enterprises succeed and strengthen the local ag economy. We formulated our comments based on the following principals to create an ordinance that will:

1. Allow for the creation of diversified ag economy and income streams
2. Lower the barriers of entry to farmers and encourage a new generation of farmers
3. Ensure a simple and accessible permitting process
4. Respect public safety and quality of life
5. Promote public education on farming and rural life

Our comments are focused on achieving the stated goals of the Yolo county general Plan and the Yolo County Tactical plan to stimulate and support the regional farm economy through 'agritourism', and at the same time promote greater food access and food security by building a more vibrant farm economy.

Through our discussions we found the key needs for farmers to successfully enhance their ag enterprises through agritourism are feeding and housing visitors. Allowing camping, farm stays, bed and breakfasts, and farm dinners is vitally important. Activities that do not require additional structures or changes to the land should be allowed by right. Low risk activities should be given latitude by both environmental health and planning departments. Currently the Capay Valley does not have enough dining or overnight stay options to keep visitors here. The Ag Ordinance should provide regulations that encourage these types of activities rather than over regulating, discouraging farmers from engaging in these activities.

In addition to these needs, there are a number of new farmers with small farms that do not meet the typical vision of farming. They have small parcels and small scale plans that do not fit the conventional definitions provided in this document. They often maximize their personal labor and emphasize market relationships rather than capital intensity. For example, a small dairy of six cows could never comply with the regulations mandated for large dairies with hundreds of cows. Some of these small-scale farmers, farm on as few as four acres. Traditionally, an economically viable farm is considered as no less than 80 acres. New farmers cannot afford to purchase 80 acres. Without inheriting land there is almost no way for new farmers to enter the industry unless they can find small parcels to purchase.

There are many events that go on in the Capay Valley, that do not meet the cookie-cutter definition of an event center. Many of these events should go on by right. For example, school tours were not included in the ordinance. This is an important activity a lot of farms participate in. It generates minimal traffic and gives children valuable exposure to farming. This type of activity should be separated from event centers. The Ag Task Force has appointed a subcommittee to further work on our comments regarding event centers without a direct ag component as a current consensus has not been reached on their role in agritourism. This subcommittee will look at parcel size, density, and access when developing regulation comments. It will also look at the event component included in Bed and Breakfasts.

There are several other issues not addressed in the ordinance. Commercial kitchens are missing from the ordinance. Commercial kitchens are a necessary addition due to the fact many foods must be prepared in a commercial kitchen in order to be served to the public. Many people in the Capay Valley are considering installation of commercial kitchens as a way to maximize the value of on-farm production. These Kitchens should be encouraged as an extension of the Cottage Foods Bill that allows the production of low risk foods in ones home kitchen. They should be seen as a 'by right' activity that is much like a winery- finishing farm production to its highest value and greatest return to the producer. U-Picks, areas the public can go and pick their own produce, are also absent from the ordinance. U-picks are considered quintessential agritourism by some and should be allowed by right.

Additionally, the Ag Task Force had participation with many local livestock farmers. We used their expertise to pick reasonable amounts of animals that a farmer should be able to keep without any oversight. The consensus was that a lot of the proposed numbers were far too low and restrictive. The farmers are the experts on what numbers can reasonably be kept with minimal oversight.

Farmers in the Capay Valley are already engaged in numerous ancillary activities on their farms. They generate additional income for the farmer, provide the public with education on farming and rural life, and generate additional tax revenue for the county. Excessive permitting and regulation will prevent a lot of these activities from continuing. We would like to also propose a self-certification checklist for many of these activities, which are listed in the attached table. Self-certification

checklists would be available online creating guidance and accountability for the farmer at no cost. The Ag Task Force believes farmers need to be responsible and this provides a free mechanism for creating positive outcomes with a more streamlined approach. The Yolo County Health Department developed self-certification checklists for vendors at the Almond Festival and it was very successful. The Capay Valley Vision Ag Task Force would be happy to help in the creation of these checklists.

Farming is a challenging business. Increased regulations, market concentration and high costs of entry have caused new rural entrepreneurs/farmers to be more creative and look to ancillary enterprises to supplement their incomes on the farm. By enacting our recommendations we feel it would help the County achieve its goals set fourth in the General Plan where Yolo County committed to preserve agriculture, promote a healthy farm economy, and to educate the public on agricultural issues. A more liberalized ag ordinance will also assist growers with their ambitions of creating more regionally centered food production to better serve the County's food needs. Educating the community on what is grown just miles away and creating new public outlets to purchase food will greatly encourage the community to eat locally, and will at the same time improve the quality of life for county residents.

Thank you for considering our comments; please see the additional definitions and recommended changes to the allowable land uses and permit requirements. The Capay Valley Vision Ag Task Force considers these changes crucial for the future of agriculture in the Capay Valley.

Sincerely,

Paul Muller
Chairman, Ag Task Force

CC: Supervisor Duane Chamberlain, Chairman
Supervisor Mike McGowan
Supervisor Don Saylor
Supervisor Matt Rexroad
Supervisor Jim Provenza
John Bencomo, Director Planning and Public Works
Leslie Lindbo, Director of Environmental Health
John Young, Ag Commissioner

Recommended altered and additional definitions:

Bake shop- a facility for the preparation and consumption of food items.

Farm Dinners- Dinners hosted on farms where the primary products come from the host farm. The farmer may add value to the product and serve to guests.

Rural Recreation- Activities performed out doors including but not limited to hiking, biking, and picnicking. Mechanized activities are excluded.

School Tours- School children visiting a farm to learn about agriculture through a school sponsored trip.

Small Dairies- a dairy consisting of 20 or fewer cows.

Unimproved Farm Stay / primitive campground- an area on a farm or ranch with no additional improvements where guests can stay overnight.

U-Pick- A designated area on a working farm the public can go to pick farm fresh produce.

Value-Added Product- a product produced from an agricultural commodity, such as, but not limited to, pie, jam, or juice.

Agricultural Commercial and Rural Recreational Uses		
Commercial Use	Comments	Current AN
Farm Equipment	Allow 1 temporary annual sale	Not Allowed
Christmas tree/pumpkin patches/ corn maze	Allowed / self certification	UP (m)
Nurseries and landscaping materials	Allowed less than one acre with less than \$50,000 annual gross sales	UP (m)
Roadside stands and produce stands	Walk up stands allowed	SP
"Yolo Stores"	SAME	UP (m)
Wineries and custom olive mills, small	Allowed with self certification	SP
Wineries and olive oil operations, large	SP	UP (m)
Private stables	Allowed	SP
Commercial Stable, small	Up to 10 allowed with self certification	SP
Commercial stables, large	Same	UP (m)
Bed and Breakfast small	Allowed. The event components of B&B's will be reviewed by Ag Task Force subcommittee	SP
Bad and Breakfast large	SP. The event components of B&B's will be reviewed by Ag Task Force subcommittee	UP (m)
Farm Stays	Allowed with food and cap of 25 people overnight	SP
Other Agritourism uses	Delete	SP/UP (m)
Hotels, motels	SAME	Not Allowed
Rural restaurants	UP (m)	Not allowed
Campground	Developed SP primitive A	Not allowed
Primitive campground	Allowed	UP (M)
RV park	Same	Not allowed
Parks, golf course, country clubs	Same	Not allowed
Fisheries, game preserves	A	UP (M)
Sport shooting, hunting, gun and fishing clubs	Move sport shooting to the category, separate from fisheries and game preserves. UP (m)	Not separated
Off-road vehicle course	SAME	Not allowed

Ponds, Lakes, reservoirs	Remove commercial pools, add reservoirs. Allowed, regulated by Department of Water Resources	UP (M)
Health resorts, Spas, and retreat centers, commercial pools	Same	UP (M)
Rural sport activities	Allowed with checklist, remove sport shooting, define as hiking, biking, etc.	UP (M)
Fowl/Poultry Ranches less than 20,000 per year	A with checklist if pasture raised. Over 20,000 default to federal regulation.	UP (m) over 100 units
Hog Farms or Ranches up to 10 breeding sows	A with checklist	A up to 10 hogs
Hog Farms or Ranches over 10 breeding Sows	SP	UP (m) over 10 hogs
Small Animal farms, under 200 animals	A	A under 25 animals
Small Animal farms, over 200 animals	A with checklist	SP over 25 animals
Aquaculture	Allowed up to 1 acre	UP (m)
Animal hospitals and veterinary medical facilities	UP (m)	Same
Non-profit rescue facilities, less than 15 dogs or domesticated animals	Same	A
Kennels and animal shelters, 15 or more dogs or domesticated animals	Same	UP (m)
Additions		
School Tours	Allow school tours and do not classify as "event"	Included in events
Farm tours	Allowed	
Commercial kitchens	Allowed less than 2500	
Cottage Foods	Allowed	
U-Pick	Allowed	Missing
Tasting Rooms for items other than wineries	Allowed	
Breweries / Distilleries	SP	Missing
Farm Dinners	Allowed with majority of product from on farm	

Mixed Use Facility	SP	Missing
Sheep/Goat Meat Pastured rotational grazing under 1000	A	Missing
Sheep/Goat Meat Pastured rotational grazing over 1000	SP	Missing
Under 400 hogs	UP (m)	Missing
Over 400 hogs	UP (M)	Missing
Over 1,000	Default to federal regulations	Missing