



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-12-86
Meeting 12-29
November 14, 2012

AGENDA ITEM 6

AGENDA ITEM

Informational Presentation from Paul Ringgold on the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST)
Farmland Protection Program

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "G. Ringgold".

Receive this informational report on the POST Farmland Protection Program

SUMMARY

Preserving agricultural land and maintaining agricultural uses of working lands is an essential component of open space conservation. Since 1984, more than 200,000 acres of farmland has been lost to urbanization in the nine-county Bay Area. The story in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties is dramatic. Between 1990 and 2008, cropland shrank by 40 percent in San Mateo County. In Santa Clara County it shrank by 39 percent - a loss of more than 20,000 acres.

Recognizing the need to ensure that agriculture is sustainable and financially viable; POST has recently announced a new program focused on preserving agricultural land and agricultural operators. Called the Farmland Protection Program, POST is adopting a new approach to ensure that protected farmland remains available for agriculture and that farmers are able to build equity in the lands on which they operate. The expanded protection of farmland introduces new tools to use whether POST is selling farmland already owned, renewing leases already held, or entering into new leases. In all cases, POST will also encourage organic farming on these lands.

POST is proactively addressing the challenges facing today's farmers through the following mechanisms:

1. **Affirmative Agricultural Easements** - Traditional conservation easements focus on limiting development and protecting a property's natural features. Affirmative agricultural easements, however, also require that the protected land be kept in agriculture.
2. **Options to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV)** - If the owner of a property covered by an affirmative agricultural easement can no longer farm or is unable to find an approved agricultural buyer, the OPAV gives POST the opportunity to buy the land back from the farmer at an agreed upon price.
3. **Ground Leases** - Unlike a traditional lease, a ground lease allows the tenant to own and build equity in improvements on the land (infrastructure, buildings, etc.) as an investment in his or

her own future. When the lease ends, the tenant is able to sell the improvements to a new tenant, who leases the land from POST.

4. Land Improvement Loans - Finding sufficient funding for necessary improvements is a challenge for farmers. POST will provide loans to help tenants or property owners with affirmative agricultural easements make improvements that might otherwise be a challenge to fund.

Paul Ringgold, POST's Vice President for Land Stewardship, will provide a presentation on these key features of the Farmland Protection Program.

BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

Committee review is not required for this agenda item.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

This is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Responsible Department Manager:
Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Manager

Prepared by:
Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Manager

Contact person:
Same as above