



Sonoma County Food System Alliance

DRAFT Results

April 17th 2012, 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM

Department of Health Services

	Debora Hammond	√	Jana Hill	√	Lisa Preschel
	Craig Anderson		Trathen Heckman	√	Linda Peterson
	Doug Baretta	√	Wendy Krupnick		Jim Shelton
√	Ellen Bauer		Cathy Luellen-Aflague		Susan Stover
√	Phina Borgeson		Lisa Correia	√	Amy Chestnut
	Davin Cardenas		Melissa Minton		Rick Theis
	Cathryn Couch		Tanya Narath	√	Amanda Bornstein
√	Paula Downing		Jim Canterbury		Marion Deeds
	Suzanne Doyle		Paul Kaiser		Lisa Andresen
	Talmadge Savage		Joe Pozzi		Nica Poznanovich
	Terry Garrett	√	Lynn Silver Chafin		

With Miriam Volat (Miriam@aginnovations.org), facilitator,

Helen McGrath (Helen@aginnovations.org) and Tim tim@aginnovations.org with Ag Innovations Network.

Guests: Paul Martin, member of the Board of Directors, Ag Innovations Network. Elizabeth McCarthy from Senator Noreen Evans Office

Action Items/Decisions

- New meeting date- 3rd Wednesdays of the month, time TBD based on member responses to doodle
- Alliance will take next Action on Williamson Act – point people - Wendy, Misti, (Jana), Amy, Linda, Phina- Amy and Misti will convene first meeting

Events

- Food Service Training: May 17th
- 350 Garden Challenge: May 15-16 <http://www.igrowsonoma.org/content/350-garden-challenge>

Alliance Network

- YAFA: Farm to School work is ramping up, and addressing barriers including food safety. Half of the funding for “Farmbudsmen” position has been secured.
- FFSA: Farm to School on a county level is underway- committee has been developed, and hiring is underway to support general Alliance as well as F2S committee/efforts.
- SMFSA: Food Policy brief is being piloted in four cities Info Share

Info Share

Wendy: iGrow spin off group is developing: network for community gardens. Tuesday info from Wendy! There are currently 67 gardens at last count, a great number but many are struggling. Redwood empire plan for expansion was circulated and is impressive.

http://www.refb.org/refb_cc/new_home.html

Amy: North Coast Forest Conservation Conference June 6-8 in Santa Rosa, looking for nominations and attendees.

<http://www.sonomalandtrust.org/enews/2012/1203/1203.html>

Linda: Beginning farmers training program is up and running with a new website, and second class will begin this week combination of ag and business finance.

<http://ucanr.org/sites/BFRSOCO/>

Phina: Trinity in Sonoma gearing up for food sales. Ecology Action in Mendocino action has started a small-scale internship <http://www.growbiointensive.org/>

Dr. Lynn Silver Chafin: New county health officer and Ellen has been named the new Director of Public Health Services. Lynn is past Director of the Office of Science and Policy, of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene where she worked since 2004.

Alliance Business

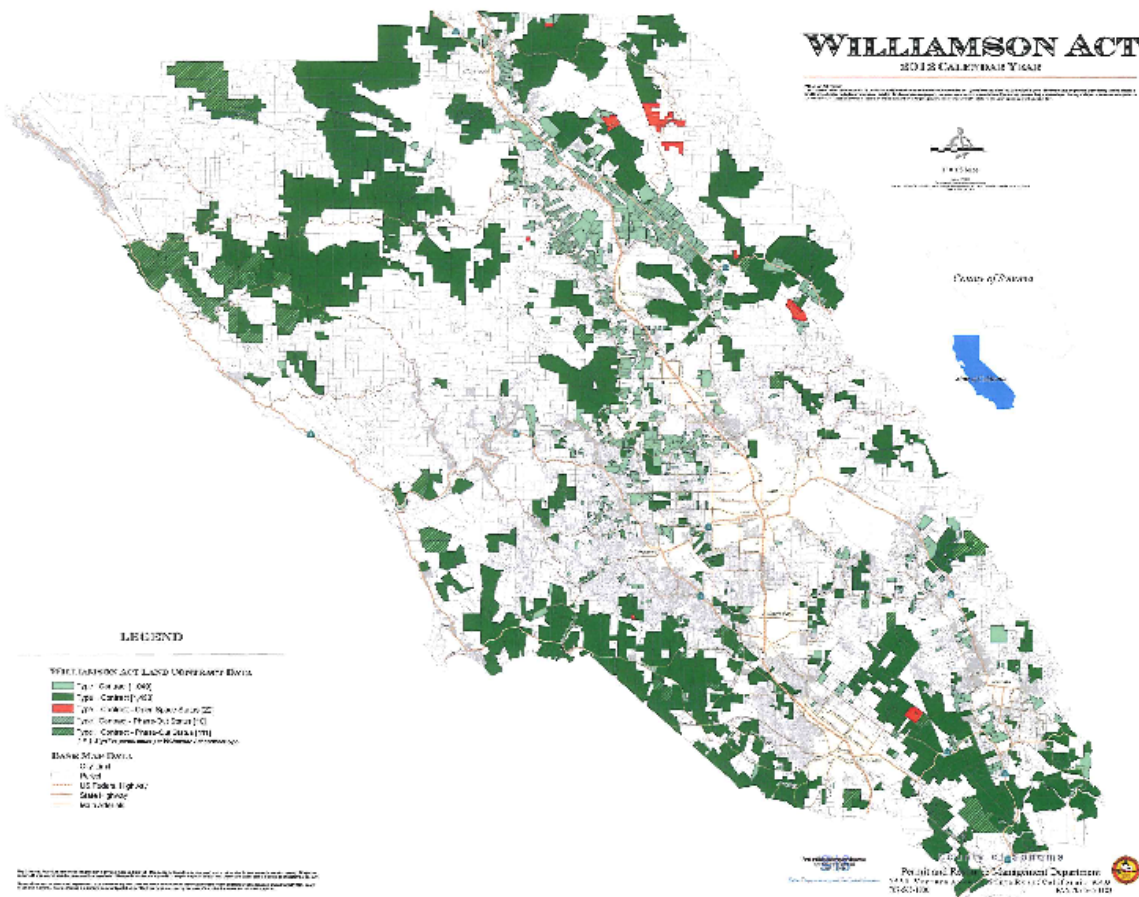
- Process Committee: call for new members to participate in on the committee- interested members should contact Miriam
- Meeting dates: will need to get approval from members not in attendance, proposal for 3rd Wednesday, timing will be proposed: 12:30-3pm will doodle to confirm
- In terms of representation, the FSA needs to explore ways of engaging working, people of color and under-represented community members and will place it on the agenda in the future. Need to develop strategies.
- Events committee will be meeting next week

Williamson Act

- Upcoming board item and decision about open enrollment
- Thought it would be helpful for the Alliance to provide support, via letter, etc. and that further education was needed

- Primary difference between Sonoma Land Trust/So. Co. Ag Preservation and Open Space: government funded v. non-profit and are in partnership, similar work and collaborate to have SCAPOS leverage public dollars
- Ag conservation easements- purchasing of development rights from farmers
 - Conservation easements can be great tool for ag land owners, often at market rate and provides
 - Combination of WA and conservation easements can often provide the most cost effective and comprehensive option for ag land owners to afford to keep land in production
 - Sonoma Co. is 1million acres, over 110,000 protected only 10%, one of the smallest amounts in the nine bay area counties
 - Reference to maps: WA is significantly more and is concentrated in the more ag productive areas- grasslands, rangeland, etc.
- Every county is dealing with the repercussions of the loss of state funding differently- Land Conservation Act 1965
- It is a private contract between land owner and County to keep land in ag/open space, and for this: family/farmer pays less property taxes, 10 year rolling contracts, but automatically renewed every year.
 - Land owners can decide to non-renew and a 9-year progression begins back market-rate property taxes
 - Cost reduction, makes it possible for farmers to afford to keep it on production
- Department of Conservation ensures those enrolled meet standards and oversees WA enrollment, that they are in compliance, etc.
- The state legislature provided some funding to counties to off-set the loss of funds from a state level, as a subvention/reimbursement to counties
- Statewide there if 16 million acres, 1/3 of privately held land, and ½ of all ag land: <http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/lca/Pages/index.aspx>
- AB 1265- suspension of WA subvention/reimbursement- every county handled it differently, So. Co. decided to maintain all current contracts, but no new enrollment/applications
 - County to county are deciding whether to continue to carry the cost and the results have varied
 - Open Space/Land Trusts can't make up the difference- there needs to be a conservation easement
- Case Study:
 - Family of eight owns land, parents die and a couple offspring want to stay on board, the rest want to sell and move on

- Family land is sold, and those wanting to stay in the business can't afford the market rate, elevated prices
- \$1.8 million for 100 acres @ 1% property tax
- Earnings from livestock is minimal- cross-compared with a 20-30K income and a property tax
- Options end up being- moving, selling, getting out of production
- Some out of county land owners have bought the land and have leased for ag production
- WA has a formula based on income, that reduces the property tax for those that meet the criteria- per acre investment is \$13 an acre v. thousands that the open space- the reduction rate is based on
- Regionally: north bay model of land cost, income and profit, v. what Sonoma county looks like
- Numbers as far as cost to county for opening up WA to come, about 10-15 waiting for entry, will be provided with BOS report



- Real estate market reality- working with rural appraisers, double million dollar properties have taken a hit, but \$2-12 million has had a 10-15% drop, but still selling and there is a market.

BOS Next Steps

- What would prevent them? Money, all county services are struggling and the loss of those funds, and the cost of administration- subvention fees basically paid to staff the program
- There are efforts to reinstate/re-fund the statewide program, rather than focus on County-based solutions
 - Similar to state parks issue- don't have the local entities solve the problem, simply push to re-instate the state funding and programs
- State asked each county to look at all contracts, based on production and of value to WA
- A lot of concern statewide of people taking advantage of the program
 - There has been a good amount of review of these contracts, and pulling out of non-compliant contracts
 - The difference between those coming out, and those wanting to come in- is there a fiscal rationale for this?
- 2007-2008- 150K in non-renewal down to 50K
- Is there analysis of the cascading effect of loss of ag land in production to the local economy?
- Ag mitigation policies- when purchasing prime ag land, responsible to buy the equivalent of ag land somewhere else, i.e. Morgan Hill example and
- Food v. wine- is there a way to create priorities that can make it more financially feasible?
- The scale of protection- minimum 10 acre scale
- Requires that land stays in ag- very different than other efforts, conservation, etc., reduction of prop taxes based ag business income

Benefits

- Alleviate risk for family/ag land
- Helps growers stay in business- ag viability
- Cost effective- less costly than conservation easements
- Language around food security
- Preserving the local economic base and job preservation- ag jobs, ag-tourism, etc.
- Preserves natural resources base
- Overall risk of loss v. other spending priorities in the county and state

- Demonstrates commitment to ag of all scales

Review of Criteria and engagement around WA- Next Steps

- Group decided to take action on the issue, working group is formed to determine- what other information is needed, and how the Alliance should proceed- letter, recommendations, etc.
- Wendy, Misti, (Jana), Amy, Linda, Phina- Amy and Misti will convene first meeting
- Issues of equity and process is key, the working group needs to consider these pieces as they move forward
 - There is a need to quantify the need \$ wide
 - Focus on fruit and veggies- food in general, “in addition too” and increasing production of these projects
 - Sonoma specific provisions/edition could be possible
 - Can include soil types and prime soil
- AIN can support with looking at what other counties and state initiatives- SACCOG!
- Timeline- open enrollment decision is coming up and this is what the FSA working group can work from here and then decide second phase of next steps, etc.
- Communications Committee: can the committee help craft language around the WA, to enhance public engagement- need to articulate the benefit of the WA

Food Action Plan

- Reviewing stakeholder feedback integrated by May FSA meeting
- Present to BOS in August and present to 2/3 of the cities by the end of the year
- Integration: i.e. water budgeting, getting feedback about who needs to be included and what criteria
- The document is getting shorter, edited tightly, and the input has been valuable and served this specific service
- Two fold: getting the information from stakeholders and informing them about the FSA
- Review before the next meeting with fresh eyes for clarity and cohesion
- Feedback is needed within the next two weeks, and potentially another round of selective stakeholder reviews
- Send out stakeholder reviews and needs for additions to Jana
- Action: once the FAP is rolled out what is the FSA role moving forward?
 - Tracking impact, evaluation, support for local cities, etc.

Next Meeting

FAP and Climate Wednesday 4/16

- Address climate issues based on the action plan
- CAFF field day event (Wendy), can bring materials as well
- Facts and context is helpful- within the state, bay area, etc.
- In addition to climate change other environmental issues