

February, 2006

Valley Cities Outgrow Ag Land

Urban areas in Fresno, Tulare counties gobble up rich soil at a rapid clip

By Donald E. Coleman / The Fresno Bee

Construction throughout the central San Joaquin Valley continues to encroach on prime agricultural land in an area that is the world's leading producer of fruit and vegetables.

Less than two years after their expected growth area expanded by nearly 50%, Sanger officials are preparing for the city to swell even more.

The city of Fresno wants to add nearly 9,000 acres, some of it agricultural land, to its sphere of influence.

A proposed 2,750-home community in Selma would increase that city's acreage by 21%. Construction also is planned in Kerman, Coalinga, Mendota and other Valley towns.

From 1992 through 2000, 294,317 acres of farmland statewide have been lost to urban uses, according to the state Department of Conservation. The San Joaquin Valley alone accounted for 64,435 of those acres, nearly 22% of the total. The trend is not slowing.

The American Farmland Trust says the country is losing 1.2 million acres of farmland annually, much of it the best and most productive soil.

"We are developing the best land disproportionately," says Edward Thompson Jr., director of American Farmland Trust's California Regional Office. "About 58% of the land developed in Fresno County in the '90s was high-quality farmland."

Thompson says based on information from the state Department of Conservation, only two counties developed quality farmland at a higher rate, Stanislaus at 88% and Tulare at 58%.

Thompson says a report to be released late this month will show that only about 41% of the farmland in Fresno County is undeveloped and two-thirds of that is considered high-quality.

He adds that if the current urban densities of the cities in Fresno County are projected out to the year 2020, the spheres of influence — or areas of future growth — of the cities would be 188% of demand or almost twice as large as they are now.

But, that's not stopping plans by cities to move forward with increasing their boundaries.

"The reality is cities have to buy land," says Sanger City Manager Jim Drinkhouse. "Developers are buying land and getting it out of the Williamson Act."

The 1965 California Land Conservation Act, better known as the Williamson Act, saves farmers and ranchers 20% to 75% in tax liability each year if they forgo development for at least 10 years.

In Sanger, where the sphere of influence was increased by 2,140 acres in 2004, developers are planning or have already built homes or apartments on 3,825 lots. Still, the city isn't satisfied with its 2004 expansion and wants to add 5,000 more acres.

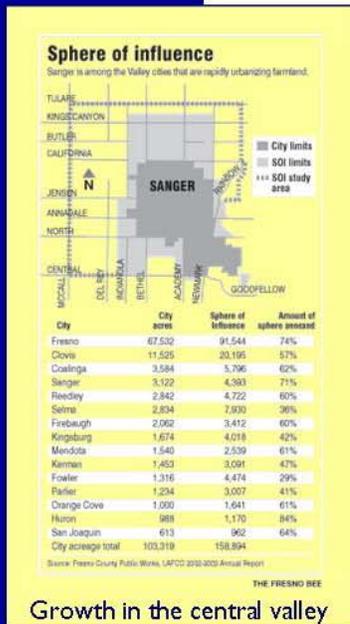
"The fear is the cities of Fresno or Clovis growing to our boundaries," Drinkhouse says. "We don't want the city of Sanger landlocked."

Across the Valley, Kerman continues to surpass its own annual records for new home permits. The city issued 282 building permits in 2005. It was the fourth consecutive record year for home building.

In fact, the city has been booming so much that the council recently put a hold on new annexations outside the city limits but within the sphere of influence. City Manager Ron Manfredi says the hold could last about a year, until the city's general plan is updated. He says commercial and industrial annexations won't be affected.

"We're busting up against the sphere line on residential," Manfredi says.

Fowler, surrounded by agriculture like many Valley communities, sits with about 29% of its sphere of influence annexed and no plans to absorb additional farmland. The last update of its sphere of influence was in 1982.



Growth in the central valley

The Sphere CALAFCO Journal

February, 2006

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CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF
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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CALAFCO: A Focus Service for 35 Years



Bill Chiat
Executive Director

Some interesting CALAFCO history arrived in the office the other day. As I was rummaging through the old records and photographs, I realized that 2006 marks the 35th year of service for the Association.

While discussions were occurring in the late 1960s about creating a statewide LAFCo organization, it was in 1971 that a majority of LAFCos approved the first Bylaws of the Association.

CALAFCO began with an annual conference and staff workshop, meetings of rural and metropolitan LAFCos, legislative representation, and member surveys. In 1974 CALAFCO Chair Helen Putnam and CALAFCO Executive Officer B. Sherman Coffman (both of San Mateo LAFCo) published the first quarterly newsletter, the predecessor of *The Sphere*.

Today, CALAFCO has grown to include 56 member LAFCos (there were 33 in May 1972) and expanded its educational, information sharing, legislative, and representative roles. In addition to the conferences and workshops, CALAFCO members have worked hard to expand its influence in Sacramento and the educational and information sharing services. Through our popular web page (averaging over 3,000 visits a week), newsletter, research papers, presentations and other work, CALAFCO expands its presence. The Legislative Committee has built the stature of CALAFCO positions on bills which affect LAFCos. State agencies now regularly consult with CALAFCO on issues related to growth, sprawl, local services, and agricultural preservation.

Our office in Sacramento, and new learning opportunities like the CALAFCO University CEQA course, have allowed CALAFCO to continue to meet the evolving needs of its members for 35 years.

As we enter our 36th year, CALAFCO continues to enhance

services. For example, in supporting LAFCo agency independence, CALAFCO has arranged volume purchasing options (such as Office Depot), and is exploring how to provide LAFCos with insurance and employee benefit programs which could lower rates with volume purchases.

In adopting its strategic plan, the CALAFCO Board of Directors identified an ambitious growth in services to members. Among the new strategies in the five year plan:

- ◆ Additional membership research resources—such as white papers
- ◆ Greater outreach to peer associations and the public
- ◆ Compilation and sharing maps, MSR findings, and local agency data that will provide statewide information and benchmarks

As important a benefit, however, is the strength in authority that CALAFCO earns through its 56 members. LAFCo has no state agency that serves as its advocate or provides support. While that assures local independence, it leaves little voice to individual LAFCos with policymakers. Through the membership of the 56 united LAFCos, CALAFCO serves as an effective representative in Sacramento and a voice on behalf of the issues that are important to Commissioners and staff.

It is this triple benefit that comes with CALAFCO membership: education and information, services that support operations, and unified representation on issues important to LAFCo.

Your Board and staff are committed to provide superior, value-added services and resources for the next 35 years. The continued support of each LAFCo—through your participation and membership—is critical to the success of all LAFCos. **Thank you!**

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

CALAFCO Board Recommends Needed Dues Increase

By Kathy Long, CALAFCO Board Chair



KATHY LONG
CALAFCO Board Chair

CALAFCO has come a long way in its 35-year history. With each change in law governing LAFCoS, and the ever-increasing challenges for each LAFCo to responsibly meet the mission of discouraging urban sprawl, preserving open-space and prime agricultural lands, and promoting orderly growth and development, members have expected CALAFCO to provide a coordinated source for information, education and representation. As the Association has grown and matured, so has the demand for member services.

Over the last several years the Board of Directors has expanded member services to meet the needs of LAFCo Commissioners, staff and stakeholders. Among the services that have been added or expanded are the website, the Sacramento office, reintroduction of *The Sphere*, member publications such as the directory, facilitation of member e-mail list-serves, work with peer organizations and state agencies, legislative representation, and volume office supply purchasing options, just to name a few. In addition, the Board has identified several strategies important to LAFCoS that are in the process of being implemented: CALAFCO University training classes, insurance and employee benefit options, research resources, and statewide data compilation.

The increase in services benefits all LAFCoS and has been accomplished with minimal increases in membership dues. However, during 2005 the CALAFCO Board began grappling with the fact that current revenues are not sufficient to maintain current operations. At the CALAFCO Annual Meeting in Monterey last fall, the Board explained that additional revenues must be raised. More than \$31,000 in additional revenue is needed next fiscal year just to maintain existing CALAFCO services.

This needed increase is a result of four conditions:

- 1) In 2004, CALAFCO took on full financial responsibility for Legal Counsel, with no increase in dues to support it. Prior to that, the San Bernardino LAFCo substantially paid for legal counsel.
- 2) CALAFCO had a significant profit from the 2004 Annual Conference in Anaheim that has helped sustain the Association over the last two years. The FY 04-05 and FY 05-06 budgets depended on large carryovers of unspent funds from the previous year. It is anticipated that there will be no carryover funds from FY 05-06.
- 3) There are no contingency funds built into the current year budget.
- 4) The Board has worked to bring in additional support from Associate Members and sponsorships of the conference and workshops, as well as carefully managing the Association's financial resources.

At the Annual Meeting last fall a dues increase was proposed, and members provided valuable feedback on improving the dues model. Over the fall, CALAFCO staff prepared a revised recommendation for the Board. The revised dues model presented at the January Board meeting maintains minimum dues based on the existing three categories of rural, suburban and urban LAFCoS and establishes a dues "cap," but otherwise apportions dues on a per capita basis. The Board also considered two budget options: a "Balanced Budget" based on dues sufficient to maintain funding for existing services and an "Ideal Budget" based on a dues level necessary to fund expanded services identified in the Board's strategic plan, such as the research reports, new CALAFCO University courses, establishment of a data warehouse, and administrative support for the CALAFCO office.

At the January meeting the Board voted to recommend the revised dues model to the membership, with a

three-year phased approach to dues increases sufficient to ultimately achieve the "Ideal Budget" goal. The phased approach will provide CALAFCO with the resources needed to maintain existing service levels, and will spread the impact of dues increases over three years. At the Annual Membership Meeting in San Diego on September 7, 2006, the Board will recommend that the Association's by-laws be amended to incorporate the revised dues model. This recommendation will also call for any dues increases for the years after the phased increases to be limited to a cost of living adjustment, thus assuring members of stability in the dues. If approved by the membership at the Annual Meeting, the first phase of the new dues will take effect during the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

All CALAFCO member Executive Officers have received information explaining the revised dues proposal, the need for the recommended dues increases and details about actual dues for each LAFCo based on the three-year phased approach. If you are a Commissioner, I encourage you to ask your Executive Officer about these recommendations. CALAFCO Board members and staff have volunteered to meet with your LAFCo to review the changes proposed and the many services CALAFCO provides. Each LAFCo is encouraged to budget for the possible dues increase for the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

Providing for adequate revenue is an important element in the growth of our Association and the role of LAFCoS in achieving the goals of Cortese-Knox-Herzberg. I believe the Association has demonstrated the value and importance of membership, and consider the proposed dues model and dues increases to be an investment that will further benefit us all. We have made great progress in Sacramento and are now being asked to the conference table with the leadership and our fellow Associations. The ability to sustain and enhance our position and our member services, however, is a responsibility we all need to acknowledge and support, with participation and with dues. Your support of your organization is appreciated.

REBIRTH OF A CEMETERY DISTRICT

Yolo LAFCo Works to Improve District Services

When preparing and researching municipal service reviews and formulating spheres of influence studies, LAFCo reviews the complete gamut of special districts. When the Yolo LAFCo undertook studies of cemetery districts a few years ago, it decided to study them together in one combined study. After all, what issues could cemetery districts possibly have that couldn't be addressed quickly and quietly?

We soon found out.

Two Great Valley Center fellows, completing their program as "consultants," wrote the study. They performed the interviews, research, analysis and writing under the oversight of LAFCo staff over a four-month period. During their research they discovered cemetery districts that were well-organized, those that were organized well enough, and then there was the Cottonwood Cemetery District.

A Cemetery District in Trouble

The Cottonwood Cemetery District was formed in 1922, although the first burial in the cemetery was in 1863. The District covers 51,233 acres of sparsely populated agricultural lands in central western Yolo County serving about 1,400 residents. The cemetery itself is five acres, with over two acres undeveloped and only three - five burials a year. The population base proved to be the district's largest problem.

Over the years, fewer and fewer residents were interested in maintaining the cemetery and the district. When the study of Cottonwood was prepared in 2003, there was one active trustee, a district manager, and a

gravedigger; in fact the same person filled all three of these positions. As a result, the cemetery landscape and grounds had fallen into disrepair and the fencing was in need of replacement. The equipment owned by the district was some shovels and rope. The district had only \$17,683 in cash reserves and received an average of \$7,434 in revenue annually.

What was a LAFCo to do?

LAFCo Facilitates a Dialogue

The staff recommendations included the possibility of consolidating with either of two adjoining cemetery districts. Neither of those adjacent districts was interested. They had their own fiscal and infrastructure concerns and, although not as serious as Cottonwood's issues, they nonetheless did not want to assume more challenges.



As a result of the studies and direction from the Yolo Commission, discussions with the district, County and LAFCo ensued concerning the District's plight. Several actions resulted from this multi-agency dialogue. First, LAFCo requested the Yolo County Board of Supervisors to initiate an annexation of land adjacent to the District. The area proposed was not within the borders of any existing cemetery district and included some population centers that could provide both additional income and residents for the District.

Second, the Board of Supervisors agreed to initiate the proceedings and took several other actions to provide some support to the struggling District:

- ◆ Submitted an application to LAFCo to annex 16,000 contiguous acres, not served by

a cemetery district, to the Cottonwood District.

- ◆ Approved a property tax transfer to the District equal to the existing property tax share in the existing district and reduced the county share by an equal amount.
- ◆ Authorized the Yolo County Public Administrator to negotiate with the District to:
 - establish an ongoing rate for the inurning or interring of the mortal remains of decedents under her care,
 - site a columbarium at the Cottonwood Cemetery;
 - transfer a county-owned 1969 tractor to the district in exchange for like value in inurnments and/or burials for Public Administrator client decedents.

The annexation proceeded through the LAFCo process with very little fanfare or concerns. The mailed notice to landowners and registered voters resulted in only a few phone conversations requesting clarification. LAFCo waived the processing fees and the County Board of Supervisors paid the recording and State Board of Equalization fees to complete the approved action.

Efforts Bring Success

Currently, the District has a full, active Board of Trustees working together to better the District's situation. They have started to establish plans for facility and service level improvements, consider changes to their fees, and negotiate with the Public Administrator for services to her office. The Board of Trustees now has enough grass-roots interest that the members are discussing expanding their members from three to five.

The Cottonwood Cemetery District has sprung into action and is a rewarding example of what can be done through the LAFCo process to improve services in a community.

Submitted by the Yolo LAFCo staff.



LEGAL CORNER

Placer County LAFCo v. Nevada County LAFCo

Court of Appeals publishes opinion on LAFCo jurisdiction in multi-county sphere determinations

This case answers the question of which LAFCo has jurisdiction to determine a multi-county district's sphere of influence and municipal service review under the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000.

The Parties

Northstar Community Services District (Northstar) is a single-county district which provides several services, including wastewater collection, to its territory. Northstar falls under the jurisdiction of the Placer County LAFCo because all of Northstar's territory is located in Placer County.

Truckee Sanitary District (TSD) is a multi-county district which provides wastewater collection service to territory within both Placer and Nevada Counties. The Nevada County LAFCo is the "principal county" for TSD under the Act because a greater portion of the assessed value of TSD's taxable property is located in Nevada County.

The Background

TSD sought approval from the Nevada County LAFCo to expand TSD's "probable boundaries and service area" (also known as a "sphere of influence") in Placer County. Northstar and the Placer County LAFCo opposed the action, claiming that the Nevada County LAFCo lacked the authority to establish spheres of influence for territory located in Placer County.

LAFCos are designed to facilitate orderly regional growth and development. Each LAFCo is required to conduct a regular "municipal service review" to determine the appropriate sphere of influence for each local agency under its jurisdiction. In this case, the court was asked to decide which LAFCo had the authority to conduct a municipal service review and to establish TSD's sphere of influence for territory located in Placer County.

The Decision

The court ruled in favor of TSD and the Nevada County LAFCo. The court held that, when a district is located in more than one county, the LAFCo of the principal county has exclusive jurisdiction to determine the sphere of influence and to conduct municipal service reviews for the entire district. Thus, the Nevada County LAFCo, as the principal county LAFCo for TSD, had exclusive jurisdiction to conduct TSD's service reviews and determine TSD's sphere of influence and, therefore,

had the authority to expand TSD's sphere of influence in neighboring Placer County.

The court noted that the Placer County LAFCo still had the authority to establish spheres of influence for all districts under that LAFCo's jurisdiction. For example, the Placer County LAFCo retained the power under the Act to conduct service reviews and to establish the sphere of influence for Northstar. The Placer County LAFCo did not, however, have the authority to modify TSD's sphere of influence in Placer County.

The Practical Result

A principal county LAFCo has exclusive jurisdiction to establish a multi-county district's sphere of influence. This LAFCo's authority to establish and expand a district's sphere of influence extends beyond the principal county's territorial boundaries.

The potential exists for neighboring LAFCos to establish overlapping spheres of influence between single and multi-county districts. Communication among LAFCos will be essential to ensure that the goals of orderly growth and development are attained.

Submitted by Ruthann G. Ziegler and Jacob H. Knapp, with Meyers Nave. Meyers Nave served as the attorneys of record for TSD in the litigation.

Ed. Note: The Third District opinion was published on 13 January 2006; docket number C047697. Meyers Nave is a new Gold Associate Member of CALAFCO.

Website Use, Content Swell

Visited the CALAFCO website recently? If not, you're missing out on what thousands of people explore each week! In mid-December, we added a tracking system to the CALAFCO website to count visitors and interests.

The CALAFCO site is averaging 3,031 visits each week. The number keeps growing, too: for the week of January 22-28 the website hit a high of 3,490 visitors.

The average visitor downloaded 2.26 documents during their visit. Recent popular documents and pages include the LAFCo directory, "Growth Within Bounds," SOI study materials, incorporation guidelines, and the 2005 conference materials.

Not surprisingly, Tuesdays-Thursdays are the busiest days, as are the hours of 10-11:00 a.m., 1-3:00 p.m. and 8-9:00 p.m. And then there are the 26.8 people/day who visit the site between 1:00 and 3:00 a.m. Hmmm.

Some of the new items on the CALAFCO Website:

- ◆ Growth Within Bounds: *Report on the Commission for Governance in the 21st Century* (thanks to OPR staff)
- ◆ 25 Year Summary of LAFCo Activity: 1963-1988
- ◆ CALAFCO paper on 56133: extension of service

Please let us know of other resources you would like to have available. Contact executive director Bill Chiat (wchiat@calafco.org) with suggestions or any problems accessing documents.

“As the Sewer Turns:” The Los Osos Community Services District

By Paul Hood, Executive Officer, San Luis Obispo LAFCo

Things are never as slow as they seem at SLO LAFCo. In 1998, LAFCo approved the formation of the Los Osos Community Services District. The district formation was set for an election and approved by 87% of the registered voters. Los Osos is an unincorporated community of about 16,000 people on the coast of San Luis Obispo County, immediately south of Morro Bay. For many years the County of San Luis Obispo had been under an order by the State Water Resources Control Board to build a sewer in the community. Studies had documented that the septic tanks in the community were polluting the ground water and subsequently the Morro Bay Estuary.

At the time of the LOCSD's formation, the County (CSA 9) was in the final stages of financing to build the \$70 million sewage treatment plant and collection system. The newly elected CSD Board inherited the sewer project and immediately began to examine various options. The financing that the County had secured was not renewed by the new CSD. However, over time the new Board reluctantly concluded that, like the County, they too needed to proceed with the sewer project or pay fines for non-compliance to be imposed by the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Since there were no grants available, the new Board secured a low interest \$135 million loan from the State and began planning the sewer project. They secured a site near downtown, went through the CEQA process, and received approvals from the County and State. However, opposition was brewing from community

residents based on the price tag and the location of the sewer plant. In 2004, two anti-sewer Board members were elected to the LOCSD Board. In 2005, a recall petition was circulated and in November 2005 the three remaining pro-sewer Board members were recalled and replaced by three new Board members who were opposed to the downtown location. A measure was also passed that removed the CSD's authority to build on the downtown site. Both the recall and the plant location measure votes were close, 51-49%.

Six weeks before the recall election the previous Board received \$6 million in State loan funds and authorized the contractors to begin work on the sewer plant and collection system. However, as soon as the new Board took office, they ordered work stopped. There was a hearing by the Regional Water Quality Control Board after which the new Board was told to restart the project or the low interest rate loan would be pulled and reallocated to another project elsewhere in the State. The RWQCB also threatened to impose up to \$12 million in fines if the new CSD Board did not immediately restart the sewer project at the downtown location.

The new CSD Board refused, the RWQCB rescinded the loan, fined the District \$6.6 million for non-compliance, and ordered them to repay the \$6 million loan advance. Contractors are demanding to be paid for work performed and for standby charges. The County wants its streets put back together from work started but not completed on the collections system. The district has now sued the State



maintaining that they are complying with the RWQCB's directives and are actively looking for an alternative sewage treatment plant site. Other lawsuits are being filed by everyone involved in the project.

A Role for LAFCo

You may be asking where does LAFCo come into this picture. Well, there is a move afoot to dissolve the Community Services District and have the County of San Luis Obispo, as successor agency, assume authority over all services, including sewer, currently provided by the LOCSD. Tag, you're it!

A notice of intent to circulate the petition has been filed and the dissolution proponents are almost ready to begin circulating the petition. They need to collect signatures from at least 10% of the registered voters to initiate proceedings. If SLO LAFCo approved the request, it can proceed without an election unless at least 25% of the voters or landowners protest the dissolution or a petition signed by at least 25% of the voters or landowners ask for an election. LAFCo staff is working with the County to determine what exactly the County's responsibility is if the district is dissolved. I am certain that things will get more and more interesting over the course of the next few months.





TRACKS Around the State

SAN DIEGO

From Mike Ott, Executive Officer

On December 8, 2005, the San Diego LAFCo's Alternate Public Member **Harry Mathis** was elected chairman of the Metropolitan Transit District Board of Directors. MTDB is responsible for moving 250,000 people in San Diego County to their different destinations every day via bus, trolley, paratransit, and taxi services. Mathis previously served two terms on the San Diego City Council and one term as Deputy Mayor of San Diego. He also served on the CALAFCo Executive Board while a member of the City Council and the San Diego LAFCo from 1995-2000.

San Diego LAFCo's Alternate City Representative **Christy Guerin** was appointed Mayor of the City of Encinitas. Mayor Guerin previously served as Deputy Mayor in 2005.

San Diego LAFCo's Special District representative **Bud Pocklington** was appointed Chairman of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's Education and Outreach Committee. Pocklington also serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the San Diego County Water Authority, Sweetwater Authority, and the South Bay Irrigation District. In 2005, he served as Chair of the San Diego LAFCo and will transfer this leadership position in February to incoming chair **Andy Vanderlaan**.

EL DORADO

From José Henriquez, Executive Officer

Everything is moving along in El Dorado County. As you know, **Roseanne Chamberlain** retired in January, and as you may *not* know, both Susan (clerk) and Corinne (policy analyst) left late last year to pursue other personal goals. So upon my appointment as E.O, the immediately challenge was to get the office back up to full staff.

I'm happy to announce that in November I hired **Elizabeth Baldwin** as the new clerk and in January, **Erica Frink** as the new policy analyst. Both bring a strong set of skills that will aid them in their new LAFCo career. In addition, I was also fortunate to have Roseanne work with me for a two-month transition period. That has certainly made life easier with both ramping up on operations and her assistance with training the new staff. Currently I'm starting to make my rounds to the various agencies to introduce myself and to brainstorm possible ways in which LAFCo staff can partner with others.

YOLO

From Elizabeth Castro Kemper, Executive Officer

The Yolo County LAFCo is pleased to announce that **Elisa Carvalho** is our new LAFCo analyst. Elisa grew up in Modesto and is a graduate of California State University, Sacramento. She is also a graduate of the Great Valley Center Fellows program. Elisa has worked on projects for both the Yolo and El Dorado LAFCos including cemetery and fire district municipal service reviews and sphere of influence studies. Ms. Carvalho brings great energy, enthusiasm and determination to our organization and, we believe, is a great addition to the LAFCo family.

Valley Cities Outgrow Ag Land

Continued from the Cover

"It's irresponsible," says Fowler City Manager David Elias. "We don't annex unless we absolutely have to. Our goal is commercial and industrial growth, and we focus growth on the Golden State [Boulevard] corridor. Too many communities are prematurely eliminating prime agricultural land. So many cities are sprawling all over the place. All they're doing is chasing the dollars."

More buildings bring more people who bring more taxes and revenue into cities. But there are prices.

"We're concerned about ag land," says Brian Nakamura, city manager of Reedley, where there are no immediate annexation plans but the general plan will be updated. "The recent storms have shown that the more rooftops and asphalts that are put down has an effect on how much water a city can absorb. We will grow but at a rate that [is] compatible with the community, including the ag community."

In December, the Local Agency Formation Commission approved the 1,335-home Harlan Ranch project, north of Highway 168 and south of Shepherd Avenue. It added more than 400 acres to the city of Clovis. Clovis has announced plans to annex 500 more acres.

Clovis, Coalinga, Firebaugh, Fresno, Huron, Mendota, Orange Cove, Reedley, Sanger and San Joaquin already have more than 50% of their spheres of influence annexed.

Last January, LAFCo agreed to a 14-square-mile annexation for the city of Fresno after city officials said the agency's approval was needed for Fresno to renew its federal water contract.

But, the federal Bureau of Reclamation said that wasn't true. Mayor Alan Autry apologized for misinforming the commission and Public Utilities Director Martin McIntyre resigned over the error. The city withdrew the plan in March, but LAFCo voted it down anyway in April.

Last month, the Fresno council voted to resubmit the request to bring the land into its sphere of influence. The land is primarily agricultural, with about 2,180 acres under Williamson Act contracts.

Even tiny Huron, with 1,170 acres in its current growth area, wants to get in on the expansion act. The city's last update of its sphere was in 1988.

"We now have a tax-sharing agreement with the county, and we're in a position to start planning for annexations and growth," says Interim City Manager Alan J. Bengyel. "We're looking to extend our sphere by 600 to 800 acres. It's time to expand."

Mendota, which hasn't had its sphere updated since 1982, also has plans to expand its boundaries.

Several subdivisions are being planned, one with 422 homes on 91 acres and another on 68 acres for 480 multiple-family units for farmworker housing, 73 single-family homes, a commercial center, a child-care center, a service station, professional offices and a farm-labor transportation center.

"We're updating our general plan and looking at expansion," says Mendota City Manager Gabriel Gonzalez. "We could add about 600 acres in the next 12-18 months."

Still, the erosion of high-quality farmland is not expected to be immediate.

"Under the most controlled situations, most of the land won't be developed," says the farmland trust's Thompson. He says development at the same rate as in the '90s would mean an additional 1 million acres would be developed by 2040, and there are 5.5 million acres of irrigated farmland in the Valley.

He says, "That's a relatively small number of landowners who'll be able to cash in."

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CEQA for LAFCo

A Workshop for LAFCo Staff and Commissioners on LAFCo and the California Environmental Quality Act

TECHNICAL WORKSHOP

This intense one-day workshop is designed to give LAFCo staff, Commissioners and stakeholders an in-depth look at their role and responsibilities as a responsible agency under CEQA. The class highlights the law, guidelines, procedures, determinations, case examples and your questions.

INSTRUCTOR

James G. Moose, Partner
Remy, Thomas, Moose and Manley, LLP

Since the late 1980s, Mr. Moose has taught courses on CEQA through UC Extension and the Association of Environmental Professionals. Within the City of Sacramento and Sacramento County, he has served on a number of advisory bodies addressing environmental issues related to recycling and integrated waste management. He frequently testifies in the California Legislature on environmental issues, and has participated in drafting amendments to CEQA and other environmental laws.

COURSE DETAILS

FRIDAY
17 March 2006

10:00 am to 3:00 pm

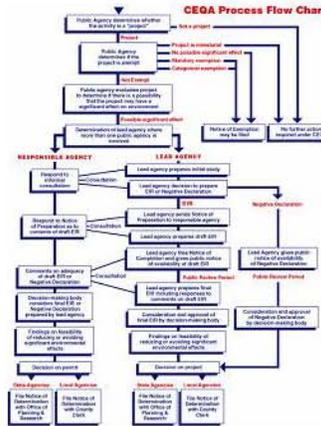
CALAFCO
Conference Center
801 12th Street
Sacramento, CA

Registration Fee

Members and Associates
\$75/person
\$60/person for three or more from the same agency
Nonmembers **\$125**

Registration includes lunch and course materials.

Space is limited. Register early.



REGISTRATION

Please send registration and check (payable to "CALAFCO") to:
Paul Hood, EO
San Luis Obispo LAFCo
1042 Pacific Street, Suite A
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Questions 805/781-5795

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Upcoming CALAFCO Events

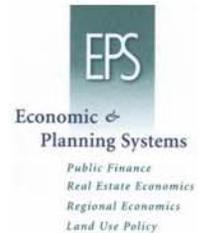
Details and registration materials for these and other CALAFCO activities are available on the website at www.calafco.org.

MARCH 17
CEQA for LAFCo.
CALAFCO University Course, Sacramento

APRIL 26-28
CALAFCO Staff Workshop, South Lake Tahoe

SEPTEMBER 5-7
CALAFCO Annual Conference, San Diego

CALAFCO Gold Associate Members



REGISTRATION FORM

LAFCo or Agency _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Attendees _____

FEES

Members
___ at \$75 \$ _____
___ at \$60 \$ _____
Three or more from same agency registering together
Non-Members
___ at \$125 \$ _____
Total Enclosed \$ _____

NOTICE: Seating is limited. Registrations are transferable but there are no refunds.



CALAFCO provides statewide coordination of LAFCo activities, serves as a resource to the Legislature and other bodies, shares information among LAFCos and other governmental agencies, and provides a forum for technical advice to LAFCos.

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSIONS

Sharing Information and Resources