

California Water Plan Update 2009
Resource Management Strategy Workshops: Agricultural Lands Stewardship
August 26, 2008

Agricultural Lands Stewardship

- **clarify**: could explain contextual connection between this Resource Management Strategy and Delta Vision
- **clarify**: can add connection to urban-land interface, which ties back to land use management RMS

Agricultural Lands Stewardship in California

- **clarify**: page 3 (second to last paragraph) has some outdated names for RMS, and some are missing (e.g., multiple flood strategies), including the last “Other RMS” which includes crop idling and land retirement
 - note: each chapter will need a “pointer section” to related RMS
- **add**: experiencing dramatic turnover in agriculture of the units being farmed (and personnel), those between 100 and 1000 units disappearing, but overhead means that size of viable unit is growing rapidly
- **add**: demographics are changing – ten times more farmers over 65 than under 65, children are not farming and lands are being taken up by professional management companies, *so agencies need to understand they’re not going to be dealing with family farms but rather professional managers with large units, and investors in those will be far away and only interested in returns*. This ties back to habitat – farmers preserved a lot for aesthetic reasons, but investors far away will not care about the aesthetics.
 - **structural suggestion**: demographics, units, turnover go into California section, then consequences can go in the issues section (insofar as they are impediments that make implementing this RMS difficult), changing economic incentive would have to be mitigated to maintain this RMS
- **clarify**: how Watershed Coordinator Grant Program (p3) fits into discussion – how fits with things RMS wants to achieve, the goals of agriculture land stewardship, which could be added to what they’re doing
- **clarify**: integrated on-farm drainage (page 4): there is something to dispose of at the end, you just get a more concentrated solution in lesser volume (which can then be sold), so could use the term “reduced”
 - topic is mentioned in detail in new Salinity Management RMS
- **clarify**: second to last sentence on page 4: not always true, some programs pay for stewardship and restoration
- **clarify**: whether CALFED Working Lands Subcommittee (p5) is still active

Potential Benefits of Agricultural Land Stewardship

- **remove:** #2 sounds more like a challenge, unclear whether a date was to be added here, probably should be pulled completely – appears to be relic from an outline
- **add:** climate change: can flag that ALS has role in both mitigating and adapting to climate change
 - however, Air Resources Board regulators do not feel that the science behind carbon sequestration is able to produce usable numbers yet
 - there is the issue of how climate change will affect nitrogen as well
 - Bernadette Skullen (sp?) at U. Texas has good work on this, Roy Peterson (DWR) will provide a reference
- **add:** discussion of benefits to the environment – more eco-friendly practices that are sustainable; this follows on the working lands thing
- **add:** discussion of economic diversification for agricultural communities, often associated with agricultural tourism

Potential Costs of Agricultural Land Stewardship

- **clarify:** talking about “annual rents” (bottom of p7 onto p8) needs to be more specific – rangelands, dry lands, irrigated lands, etc, some could be much more (\$400) or be much less (\$50)
 - the same goes for the total California cost
- **add:** stewardship requires additional (different) labor and management on the part of farmers, if this can be quantified

Major Issues and Considerations Facing Agricultural Lands Stewardship

- **clarify:** issue 9 – the references to “(e) and (g)” will need to be updated because things have been moved around
- **clarify:** could add not just known issues and unwanted consequences
- **add:** for program design purposes: earlier discussion of agricultural lands conversion (middle-scale disappearing) and the economics involved in this, and non-resident managers, and aging farm population (the latter is part of what’s driving the exit of the “citizen farmer”) – the first two are the issues being driven by the third
- **add:** item 11 food safety is burning these projects to the ground: living organisms will poop in the fields, and all processors are scared to death and telling us to cut down the vegetation and get rid of the animals because the costs associated with contaminated food product are astronomical, so the risk for the grower, processor, and retailer are huge and right now a lot of habitat is disappearing
- **add:** rising energy costs will change farming, and may see shift to more labor-intensive rather than mechanized practices

- **structural suggestion**: it's a very long section, so sub-groups or categories would help lay readers, perhaps some prioritization – starting with big issues perhaps
- **add**: issue 18 summarizes many things, it's not clear if this is a specific issue, while 19 and 20 seem redundant
- **add**: issue 1 last half of this is redundant
- **clarify**: issue 3 has information required under grant program and under a regulatory program – what they are and what they cost would be very helpful
- **add**: issue 4 talks about CA Watershed Council, does not exist, may want to change to statewide watershed program
- **add**: water conservation and rights language could be expanded
- **add**: issue 12 and 13 could also be drawn out (I missed the details of this)

Recommendations for Agricultural Lands Stewardship

- **add**: have statement about doing more research – this would be key for food safety issues, for example, “find a way to reduce the risk that habitat represents for food security,” whether to the grower or the liability too
- **add**: 1-B-iii: needs to be updated
- **add**: safe farmer agreements – iii and iv also need clarification on safe harbor part needs linking to habitat conservation plans, and not clear why Resources Agency listed – NCCPs also being done by local governments, and making part of IRWMs would be great – *and need very tight linkage to issues section, general comment for section*
- **add**: G-ii should be reflected in the Water Transfers section
- **add**: D-ii is generic, need to identify someone at CDFA as specific leader and strengthen this paragraph so that that person leads an effort to make habitat compatible with agriculture, whether through better sanitation or post-harvest processing, has to be specific and stronger
- **add**: have legislative aspect too: legislature could amend legal liability be reduced
- **add**: H-I needs updated – the new Farm Bill is out, specific edits have also been sent to Ken

Attendance

In Room:

Beverley Anderson, Sac River Area
Conservation Forum
Lisa Beutler, CCP
Gale Cismowski, CVRWQCB
Philip Erro, West Side Resource
Conservation District
Megan Fidell, DWR
Dorian Fougères, CCP
Kamyar Guivetchi, DWR

Bruce Gwynne, DOC
Barbara Hennigan, Hennigan Farms
Bob Hennigan, Hennigan Farms
Rebecca Kanegawa, Montgomery-Watson
Harza
Jennifer Kofoid, DWR
Lorraine Marsh, DWR
Lew Moeller, DWR
Michael Perrone, DWR
Roy Peterson, DWR

internal working document, not for distribution

Daniel Roque, Conway Ranch
Ken Trott, CDFA
Betty Yee, CVRWQCB

Ricardo Amon, CEC
Marian Ashe CalEPA
Luana Kiger, NRCS
Fred Lee, Fred Lee & Associates
Melanie Powers, CABY
Lorraine White CEC

On Phone/GoToMeeting: