

MEMORANDUM
OFFICE OF THE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF PLACER

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery, District 5

DATE: February 10, 2009

SUBJECT: Approve a letter to the Governor and State Legislative Representatives in opposition to the proposed elimination of subventions to local governments for Property Tax losses from land enrolled in Williamson Act contracts.

ACTION REQUESTED

That your Board approve the attached letter for the Chairman's signature to Governor Schwarzenegger and Placer County's state legislative representatives. This letter opposes the Governor's proposal to eliminate subventions to local governments for property tax losses incurred by enrolling land in Williamson Act contracts.

BACKGROUND

Your board is well aware of the voluntary Williamson Act program which provides lower property assessments to agricultural landowners in exchange for their contractual commitments to keep their land in agricultural or open space uses for at least 10 years.

Enacted in 1965, the Williamson Act is a voluntary program, which provides lower property taxes to agricultural landowners in exchange for their contractual commitments to keep their land in agricultural or open space uses for at least 10 years. In 1971, state funding was provided which created a formula for allocating payments to local governments based on acreage enrolled in the program. This financial support has provided a tangible incentive for local governments to stay in the program and initiate more contracts by partially replacing property tax revenues lost on enrolled land. The Williamson Act currently protects over 16.3 million acres of agricultural land in California, much of it having scenic open space and wildlife value, and over half of the state's prime farmland in 52 counties is protected by the Act.

Placer County has approximately 40,000 acres enrolled in the Williamson Act and it would be consistent with the County's goals and policies to continue to support State funding of the program.

PLACER COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

The 1994 Placer County General Plan recognizes the importance of agriculture and states the following goals and policies under Section 7, Agricultural and Forestry Resources:

Agricultural Land Use

Goal 7.A: "To provide for the long-term conservation and use of agriculturally-designated lands."

Policy 7.A.1., "The County shall protect agriculturally-designated areas from conversion to non-agricultural uses."

Policy 7.A.5., "The County shall regularly monitor and comment on pending state and federal legislation affecting agricultural lands."

Policy 7.A.12., "The County shall actively encourage enrollments of agricultural lands in its Williamson Act program."

Economic Viability of Agriculture

Goal 7.C: "To protect and enhance the economic viability of Placer County's agricultural operations."

The Governor's FY 09-10 State Budget includes a proposal to permanently eliminate subventions of \$34.7 million in FY's 2008-09 and 2009-10 to local governments for property tax losses incurred by enrolling agricultural land in Williamson Act contracts. The cost of paying full property tax value may jeopardize the economic feasibility of many Placer County ranches and farms.

FISCAL IMPACT

The County Executive Office estimates that the fiscal impact to Placer County's revenues would be approximately \$50,000.00 (fifty thousand) from the Governor's proposed action.

Attachments: Letter to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
 Letter to Senator Sam Aanestad
 Letter to Senator Dave Cox
 Letter to Assemblyman Ted Gaines
 Letter to Assemblyman Dan Logue

County of Placer Board of Supervisors

175 FULWEILER AVENUE
AUBURN, CALIFORNIA 95603
530/889-4010 • FAX: 530/889-4009
PLACER CO. TOLL FREE # 800-488-4308

F.C. "ROCKY" ROCKHOLM
District 1

ROBERT M. WEYGANDT
District 2

JIM HOLMES
District 3

KIRK UHLER
District 4

JENNIFER MONTGOMERY
District 5



February 10, 2009

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Governor's Proposal to Eliminate Williamson Act Subventions

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

The Placer County Board of Supervisors took action on February 10, 2009, to voice their strong opposition to the Governor's FY 09-10 State Budget proposal to permanently eliminate subventions of \$34.7 million in FY's 2008-09 and 2009-10 to local governments for property tax losses incurred by enrolling agricultural land in Williamson Act contracts.

Enacted in 1965, the Williamson Act is a voluntary program, which provides lower property taxes to agricultural landowners in exchange for their contractual commitments to keep their land in agricultural or open space uses for at least 10 years. In 1971, state funding was provided which created a formula for allocating payments to local governments based on acreage enrolled in the program. This financial support has provided a tangible incentive for local governments to stay in the program and initiate more contracts by partially replacing property tax revenues lost on enrolled land.

While the Placer County Board of Supervisors recognizes the significant impact this proposal will have in our area, we would also like to acknowledge the impact elimination of this program would have on all counties and cities. The Williamson Act currently protects over 16.3 million acres of agricultural land in California, much of it having scenic open space and wildlife value, and over half of the state's prime farmland in 52 counties is protected by the Act.

Agriculture is an important industry in Placer County. Eliminating subvention payments would be the first step towards a total unraveling of the strongest agricultural conservation program in the State. Should this occur, the cost of paying full property tax value could jeopardize the economic feasibility of many ranches and farms, driving them out of business. The financial toll

on the farming and ranching community, not to mention the resulting loss of agricultural lands, open space and wildlife benefits cannot be calculated.

At a time when California's population is growing at a phenomenal rate, it is critical the state work with local government to protect agricultural land resources. The Williamson Act contracts represent one important way we can accomplish this mutual goal and benefit our citizens by preserving our shrinking open space.

The Placer County Board of Supervisors recognizes the current economic crisis. The Board is poised to continue to work in partnership with the State in addressing its budget crisis. However, we urge that you do not eliminate the Open Space Subvention Program and the State's historical support of the Williamson Act.

Respectfully Submitted,

F.C. Rockholm, Chair
Board of Supervisors

cc: California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC)
Don Peterson, Peterson Consulting, Inc.

County of Placer Board of Supervisors

175 FULWEILER AVENUE
AUBURN, CALIFORNIA 95603
530/889-4010 • FAX: 530/889-4009
PLACER CO. TOLL FREE # 800-488-4308

F.C. "ROCKY" ROCKHOLM
District 1

ROBERT M. WEYGANDT
District 2

JIM HOLMES
District 3

KIRK UHLER
District 4

JENNIFER MONTGOMERY
District 5



February 10, 2009

The Honorable Senator Dave Cox
State of California
State Capitol, Room 2068
Sacramento, CA 94248-0001

Re: Governor's Proposal to Eliminate Williamson Act Subventions

Dear Senator Cox:

The Placer County Board of Supervisors took action on February 10, 2009, to voice their strong opposition to the Governor's FY 09-10 State Budget proposal to permanently eliminate subventions of \$34.7 million in FY's 2008-09 and 2009-10 to local governments for property tax losses incurred by enrolling agricultural land in Williamson Act contracts.

Enacted in 1965, the Williamson Act is a voluntary program, which provides lower property taxes to agricultural landowners in exchange for their contractual commitments to keep their land in agricultural or open space uses for at least 10 years. In 1971, state funding was provided which created a formula for allocating payments to local governments based on acreage enrolled in the program. This financial support has provided a tangible incentive for local governments to stay in the program and initiate more contracts by partially replacing property tax revenues lost on enrolled land.

While the Placer County Board of Supervisors recognizes the significant impact this proposal will have in our area, we would also like to acknowledge the impact elimination of this program would have on all counties and cities. The Williamson Act currently protects over 16.3 million acres of agricultural land in California, much of it having scenic open space and wildlife value, and over half of the state's prime farmland in 52 counties is protected by the Act.

Agriculture is an important industry in Placer County. Eliminating subvention payments would be the first step towards a total unraveling of the strongest agricultural conservation program in the State. Should this occur, the cost of paying full property tax value could jeopardize the economic feasibility of many ranches and farms, driving them out of business. The financial toll

on the farming and ranching community, not to mention the resulting loss of agricultural lands, open space and wildlife benefits cannot be calculated.

At a time when California's population is growing at a phenomenal rate, it is critical the state work with local government to protect agricultural land resources. The Williamson Act contracts represent one important way we can accomplish this mutual goal and benefit our citizens by preserving our shrinking open space.

The Placer County Board of Supervisors recognizes the current economic crisis. The Board is poised to continue to work in partnership with the State in addressing its budget crisis. However, we urge that you do not eliminate the Open Space Subvention Program and the State's historical support of the Williamson Act.

Respectfully Submitted,

F.C. Rockholm, Chair
Board of Supervisors

cc: California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC)

County of Placer Board of Supervisors

175 FULWEILER AVENUE
AUBURN, CALIFORNIA 95603
530/889-4010 • FAX: 530/889-4009
PLACER CO. TOLL FREE # 800-488-4308

F.C. "ROCKY" ROCKHOLM
District 1

ROBERT M. WEYGANDT
District 2

JIM HOLMES
District 3

KIRK UHLER
District 4

JENNIFER MONTGOMERY
District 5



February 10, 2009

The Honorable Senator Sam Aanestad
State of California
State Capitol, Room 3063
Sacramento, CA 94248-0001

Re: Governor's Proposal to Eliminate Williamson Act Subventions

Dear Senator Aanestad:

The Placer County Board of Supervisors took action on February 10, 2009, to voice their strong opposition to the Governor's FY 09-10 State Budget proposal to permanently eliminate subventions of \$34.7 million in FY's 2008-09 and 2009-10 to local governments for property tax losses incurred by enrolling agricultural land in Williamson Act contracts.

Enacted in 1965, the Williamson Act is a voluntary program, which provides lower property taxes to agricultural landowners in exchange for their contractual commitments to keep their land in agricultural or open space uses for at least 10 years. In 1971, state funding was provided which created a formula for allocating payments to local governments based on acreage enrolled in the program. This financial support has provided a tangible incentive for local governments to stay in the program and initiate more contracts by partially replacing property tax revenues lost on enrolled land.

While the Placer County Board of Supervisors recognizes the significant impact this proposal will have in our area, we would also like to acknowledge the impact elimination of this program would have on all counties and cities. The Williamson Act currently protects over 16.3 million acres of agricultural land in California, much of it having scenic open space and wildlife value, and over half of the state's prime farmland in 52 counties is protected by the Act.

Agriculture is an important industry in Placer County. Eliminating subvention payments would be the first step towards a total unraveling of the strongest agricultural conservation program in the State. Should this occur, the cost of paying full property tax value could jeopardize the economic feasibility of many ranches and farms, driving them out of business. The financial toll

on the farming and ranching community, not to mention the resulting loss of agricultural lands, open space and wildlife benefits cannot be calculated.

At a time when California's population is growing at a phenomenal rate, it is critical the state work with local government to protect agricultural land resources. The Williamson Act contracts represent one important way we can accomplish this mutual goal and benefit our citizens by preserving our shrinking open space.

The Placer County Board of Supervisors recognizes the current economic crisis. The Board is poised to continue to work in partnership with the State in addressing its budget crisis. However, we urge that you do not eliminate the Open Space Subvention Program and the State's historical support of the Williamson Act.

Respectfully Submitted,

F.C. Rockholm, Chair
Board of Supervisors

cc: California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC)
Don Peterson, Peterson Consulting, Inc.

County of Placer Board of Supervisors

175 FULWEILER AVENUE
AUBURN, CALIFORNIA 95603
530/889-4010 • FAX: 530/889-4009
PLACER CO. TOLL FREE # 800-488-4308

F.C. "ROCKY" ROCKHOLM
District 1

ROBERT M. WEYGANDT
District 2

JIM HOLMES
District 3

KIRK UHLER
District 4

JENNIFER MONTGOMERY
District 5



February 10, 2009

The Honorable Assemblyman Dan Logue
State of California
State Capitol, Room 2002
Sacramento, CA 94249-0003

Re: Governor's Proposal to Eliminate Williamson Act Subventions

Dear Assemblyman Logue:

The Placer County Board of Supervisors took action on February 10, 2009, to voice their strong opposition to the Governor's FY 09-10 State Budget proposal to permanently eliminate subventions of \$34.7 million in FY's 2008-09 and 2009-10 to local governments for property tax losses incurred by enrolling agricultural land in Williamson Act contracts.

Enacted in 1965, the Williamson Act is a voluntary program, which provides lower property taxes to agricultural landowners in exchange for their contractual commitments to keep their land in agricultural or open space uses for at least 10 years. In 1971, state funding was provided which created a formula for allocating payments to local governments based on acreage enrolled in the program. This financial support has provided a tangible incentive for local governments to stay in the program and initiate more contracts by partially replacing property tax revenues lost on enrolled land.

While the Placer County Board of Supervisors recognizes the significant impact this proposal will have in our area, we would also like to acknowledge the impact elimination of this program would have on all counties and cities. The Williamson Act currently protects over 16.3 million acres of agricultural land in California, much of it having scenic open space and wildlife value, and over half of the state's prime farmland in 52 counties is protected by the Act.

Agriculture is an important industry in Placer County. Eliminating subvention payments would be the first step towards a total unraveling of the strongest agricultural conservation program in the State. Should this occur, the cost of paying full property tax value could jeopardize the economic feasibility of many ranches and farms, driving them out of business. The financial toll

on the farming and ranching community, not to mention the resulting loss of agricultural lands, open space and wildlife benefits cannot be calculated.

At a time when California's population is growing at a phenomenal rate, it is critical the state work with local government to protect agricultural land resources. The Williamson Act contracts represent one important way we can accomplish this mutual goal and benefit our citizens by preserving our shrinking open space.

The Placer County Board of Supervisors recognizes the current economic crisis. The Board is poised to continue to work in partnership with the State in addressing its budget crisis. However, we urge that you do not eliminate the Open Space Subvention Program and the State's historical support of the Williamson Act.

Respectfully Submitted,

F.C. Rockholm, Chair
Board of Supervisors

cc: California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC)
Don Peterson, Peterson Consulting, Inc.

County of Placer Board of Supervisors

175 FULWEILER AVENUE
AUBURN, CALIFORNIA 95603
530/889-4010 • FAX: 530/889-4009
PLACER CO. TOLL FREE # 800-488-4308

F.C. "ROCKY" ROCKHOLM
District 1

ROBERT M. WEYGANDT
District 2

JIM HOLMES
District 3

KIRK UHLER
District 4

JENNIFER MONTCOMERY
District 5



February 10, 2009

The Honorable Assemblyman Ted Gaines
State of California
State Capitol, Room 4144
Sacramento, CA 94249-0004

Re: Governor's Proposal to Eliminate Williamson Act Subventions

Dear Assemblyman Gaines:

The Placer County Board of Supervisors took action on February 10, 2009, to voice their strong opposition to the Governor's FY 09-10 State Budget proposal to permanently eliminate subventions of \$34.7 million in FY's 2008-09 and 2009-10 to local governments for property tax losses incurred by enrolling agricultural land in Williamson Act contracts.

Enacted in 1965, the Williamson Act is a voluntary program, which provides lower property taxes to agricultural landowners in exchange for their contractual commitments to keep their land in agricultural or open space uses for at least 10 years. In 1971, state funding was provided which created a formula for allocating payments to local governments based on acreage enrolled in the program. This financial support has provided a tangible incentive for local governments to stay in the program and initiate more contracts by partially replacing property tax revenues lost on enrolled land.

While the Placer County Board of Supervisors recognizes the significant impact this proposal will have in our area, we would also like to acknowledge the impact elimination of this program would have on all counties and cities. The Williamson Act currently protects over 16.3 million acres of agricultural land in California, much of it having scenic open space and wildlife value, and over half of the state's prime farmland in 52 counties is protected by the Act.

Agriculture is an important industry in Placer County. Eliminating subvention payments would be the first step towards a total unraveling of the strongest agricultural conservation program in the State. Should this occur, the cost of paying full property tax value could jeopardize the economic feasibility of many ranches and farms, driving them out of business. The financial toll

on the farming and ranching community, not to mention the resulting loss of agricultural lands, open space and wildlife benefits cannot be calculated.

At a time when California's population is growing at a phenomenal rate, it is critical the state work with local government to protect agricultural land resources. The Williamson Act contracts represent one important way we can accomplish this mutual goal and benefit our citizens by preserving our shrinking open space.

The Placer County Board of Supervisors recognizes the current economic crisis. The Board is poised to continue to work in partnership with the State in addressing its budget crisis. However, we urge that you do not eliminate the Open Space Subvention Program and the State's historical support of the Williamson Act.

Respectfully Submitted,

F.C. Rockholm, Chair
Board of Supervisors

cc: California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC)
Don Peterson, Peterson Consulting, Inc.