San Diego County
Local Agency Formation Commission
Regional Service Planning | Subdivision of the State of California

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA
SPECIAL DISTRICTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Friday, September 15, 2023
9:30 A.M. to 11:30 A.M.

Room Opens at 9:00 A.M.

County of San Diego Administration Center
1600 Pacific Highway, Room 402
San Diego, California 92101

Chair Kimberly Thorner
Vice Chair Jack Bebee

Jack Bebee Fallbrook PUD	Diane Hansen Palomar Health HCD	Marty Miller Vista ID	Oliver Smith Valley Center MWD
Ann Baldridge RCD of Greater SDC	Tom Kennedy Rainbow MWD	Mark Robak Otay WD	Kimberly Thorner Olivenhain MWD
Paul Bushee Leucadia WWD	Albert Lau Santa Fe ID	Joel Scalzitti Helix WD	Dave McQuead Rancho Santa Fe FPD
James Gordon Deer Springs FPD	Hector Martinez South Bay ID	Mike Sims Bonita-Sunnyside FPD	Jeff Egkan North County FPD

The Special Districts Advisory Committee is responsible for helping to inform the Commission on all germane items relating to San Diego LAFCO's regulatory and planning responsibilities affecting special districts.

The Committee will hold the September 15, 2023 meeting in person at the County of San Diego Administration Center (1600 Pacific Highway, Room 402, in San Diego). Three-hour visitor parking is available using the Ash Street entrance. In person attendance by the public is welcomed. The public may also watch, listen, and otherwise participate in the meeting remotely by any of the following options.

1. The public may watch and listen to the meeting live on YouTube using the link provided on our website homepage (www.sdlafco.org).

2. The public may watch, listen, and participate in the meeting by Zoom (https://zoom.us/) or by telephone at (669) 900-9128 using Meeting/Webinar ID: 895 6767 7168 and Passcode 508649. Please use the "raise your hand" function in Zoom or push *9 by telephone if/when you wish to speak. Then wait until your name is called before speaking.

   a) The public may provide eComments on any item by emailing to lafco@sdcounty.ca.gov
      - eComments received before 8:00 A.M. on Friday, September 15, 2023, will be forwarded to the Committee and posted online before the meeting. They will also be referenced during the meeting.
      - eComments received during the meeting and before the subject item is concluded will be referenced and later posted online.

1. **9:30 A.M. – CALL TO ORDER BY CHAIR**

   a) **Roll Call**
   b) **Pledge Of Allegiance**

2. **AGENDA REVIEW**

3. **OPEN EXPRESSION**
   This time is reserved for any member of the public to address the Committee on germane topics that are not directly part of the agenda. This includes requests for future Committee topics. Individuals are limited to three minutes.

4. **CONSENT ITEMS**

   a) **Approval of Meeting Minutes for March 17, 2023 (action)** **(Pages 4-10)**
   The Committee will consider draft summary minutes prepared for the last meeting held on March 17, 2023. Staff recommends approval as presented.

   b) **Update on Adopted Workplan for FY2024 (information)** **(Pages 11-14)**
   The Committee will receive an update on LAFCO's adopted workplan for 2023-2024 and status of the 30 calendared projects. Information only.

   c) **Current Proposals and Related Items (information)** **(Pages 15-26)**
   The Committee will receive a report identifying current proposals on file with LAFCO and pending submittals anticipated in the near-term. Information only.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

   a) **SALC 1.0 Review: Agricultural Trends and Related Policy Opportunities (discussion) (Pages 27-78)**
   The Committee will receive a final report tied to LAFCO's two-year $250,000 planning grant from the State of California and its Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) program. The final report and its recommendations – will be presented by co-applicant Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County. Discussion and feedback.

   Contact: Michaela Peters, Analyst I
   Joel Kramer, RCD of Greater San Diego County
   Estimate: 20 Minutes

   b) **SALC 2.0 Preview Greening Agriculture: Market Analysis to Inform and Support Economically Sustainable Small Farming in San Diego County (discussion)** **(Pages 79-90)**
   The Committee will receive a preview of LAFCO's new two-year $500,000 planning grant from the State of California and its Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) program. Work was initiated in July 2023 and involves performing market analysis for existing and emerging crops – with focus on small-farms – while also identifying government opportunities to help bridge economic gaps. Discussion and feedback.

   Contact: Michaela Peters, Analyst I
   Estimate: 10 Minutes

BUSINESS ITEMS CONTINUED…

c) Draft Policy Establishment on Out-of-Agency Services (discussion & possible action) (Pages 91-106)

The Committee will continue its review of a draft policy to govern outside service requests for cities and special districts under Government Code Section 56133. The draft policy has been prepared as part of LAFCO's adopted workplan and responds to growing attention towards out-of-agency services and related local controversies. The draft has been further refined based on Committee input provided at the December 2022 meeting. The item is being presented for discussion and possible action with respect to making recommendations.

Contact: Carolanne Ieromnimon, Analyst II
Estimate: 30 Minutes

d) LAFCO Performance Measurements: Financial Standing (discussion)

The Committee will receive a presentation on existing performance measurements employed by LAFCO in assessing financial standing of local agencies as part of the municipal service review program. The presentation is part of a planned outreach process with its advisory bodies to discuss and solicit feedback – including suggested changes – on meaningful service measurements utilized by LAFCO in making informed decisions in the municipal service reviews and related planning and regulatory activities. Discussion only. No staff report.

Contact: Priscilla Mumpower, Assistant Executive Officer
Estimate: 30 Minutes

e) Update on Fallbrook-Rainbow Reorganizations (discussion)

The Committee will receive an update on the status of the coordinated reorganization proposals filed by Fallbrook Public Utility District and Rainbow Municipal Water District to detach from the County Water Authority and annex to Eastern Municipal Water District. The update follows the Committee's advisory review of the proposals in March 2023 and subsequent actions by the Commission in July 2023. Discussion only. No staff report.

Contact: Priscilla Mumpower, Assistant Executive Officer
Adam Wilson, LAFCO Consultant
Estimate: 15 Minutes

6. COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS

7. EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT

8. ADJOURNMENT

Attest to Posting:

Erica Sellen
Committee Secretary

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4a

AGENDA REPORT
Consent | Action

September 15, 2023

TO: Special Districts Advisory Committee

FROM: Erica Sellen, Executive Assistant

SUBJECT: **Approval of Meeting Minutes for March 17, 2023**

SUMMARY

The Special Districts Advisory Committee ("Committee") will receive action minutes prepared for the last meeting held on Friday, March 17, 2023. The minutes are in draft-form and being presented for formal approval with any corrections identified by the Committee.

BACKGROUND

The Ralph M. Brown Act was enacted in 1953 and establishes standards for the public to attend and participate in meetings of local government bodies. The "Brown Act" requires – and among other items – public agencies to maintain written minutes for qualifying meetings.

DISCUSSION

This item is for the Committee to consider approving action minutes prepared by the Committee Secretary for the March 17, 2023 meeting consistent with the Brown Act.

ANALYSIS

The attached action minutes for the March 17, 2023 meeting accurately reflect the Committee's deliberations as recorded by the Committee Secretary. A video recording of the meeting has also been posted online at www.sdlafco.org/meetings.

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Krista Becker
City of Solana Beach

Dane White
City of Escondido

John McCann, Alt.
City of Chula Vista

Vice Chair Stephen Whitburn
City of San Diego

Marni von Wilpert, Alt.
City of San Diego

Jo MacKenzie
Vista Irrigation

Barry Willis
Alpine Fire Protection

David A. Drake, Alt.
Rincon del Diablo

Andy Vanderlaan
General Public

Harry Mathis, Alt.
General Public

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the Committee approve the draft action minutes prepared for the March 17, 2023 meeting as presented and consistent with Alternative One in the proceeding section.

ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION

The following alternatives are available to the Committee through a single motion:

Alternative One (recommended):
Approve the draft action minutes prepared for the March 17, 2023 meeting with any desired corrections or clarifications.

Alternative Two:
Continue to the next regular meeting and provide direction to staff as needed.

PROCEDURES

This item has been placed on the Committee's agenda as part of the consent calendar. A successful motion to approve the consent calendar will include taking affirmative action on the staff recommendation as provided unless otherwise specified by the Committee.

Respectfully,

Erica A. Sellen

Erica Sellen
Executive Assistant

Attachment: as stated

DRAFT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
SPECIAL DISTRICTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
March 17, 2023

San Diego County Administration Center
1600 Pacific Highway, Room 310
San Diego, California 92101

1. 9:00 A.M. – CALL TO ORDER BY CHAIR

Chair Kimberly Thorner called the in-person meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Item 1a
ROLL CALL

Chair Kimberly Thorner requested a roll call from the Committee Secretary.

Committee Members Present:
Chair Kimberly Thorner (Olivenhain MWD)
Vice Chair Jack Bebee (Fallbrook PUD)
Ann Baldridge (RCD of Greater San Diego County)
Paul Bushee (Leucadia WWD)
Jeff Egkan (North County FPD)
James Gordon (Deer Springs FPD)
Diane Hansen (Palomar Health HCD)
Tom Kennedy (Rainbow MWD)
Albert Lau (Santa Fe ID)
Hector Martinez (South Bay ID)
Marty Miller (Vista ID)
Mark Robak (Otay WD)
Joel Scalzitti (Helix WD)
Oliver Smith (Valley Center MWD)

Committee Members Absent:
Dave McQuead (Rancho Santa Fe FPD)
Mike Sims (Bonita-Sunnyside FPD)

The Committee Secretary confirmed a quorum with fourteen members present. The following members of San Diego LAFCO staff were present at roll call: Executive Officer Keene Simonds; Legal Counsel Aleks Giragosian; Local Government Analyst II Priscilla Mumpower; Local Government Analyst I Carolanne Ieromnimon; Local Government Analyst I Michaela Peters; GIS Analyst Dieu Ngu; Consultant Adam Wilson; Consultant Chris Cate; and Executive Assistant Erica Sellen serving as Committee Secretary.

Item 1b
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Jeff Egkan (North County FPD) led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. AGENDA REVIEW

Chair Kimberly Thorner asked the Executive Officer if there were requests to remove or rearrange items on the agenda. The Executive Officer stated no changes were needed to the agenda and proceeded to introduce LAFCO staff.

3. COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS

Chair Kimberly Thorner noted the meeting has a stop-time of 10:30 a.m. and stated this Agenda Item will be moved to Agenda Item 6, Open Expression.

4. BUSINESS ITEMS

a) Approval of Meeting Minutes for December 16, 2022 (action)

The Committee considered draft summary minutes prepared for the last meeting held on December 16, 2022. Staff recommends approval as presented.

**

On motion by Tom Kennedy and seconded by Joel Scalzitti, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes for the December 16, 2022 meeting.

b) Update on the Proposed "Rainbow MWD and Fallbrook PUD Reorganizations: Wholesale Water Services" (discussion + possible advisory action)

The Committee received an update on the concluding administrative reviews involving two related proposals filed by Fallbrook PUD and Rainbow MWD to detach from the San Diego County Water Authority. The item's presentation is for discussion with the option for the Committee to take possible action on recommendations for future consideration of the Commission.

Staff presentation provided by Local Government Analyst II Priscilla Mumpower along with consultants Adam Wilson and Chris Cate.

The Committee Secretary confirmed there was one speaker who wished to directly address the Committee. Chair Kimberly Thorner invited comments from the following person:

- Mark Hattam, Special Legal Counsel, San Diego County Water Authority

Committee members thanked Ms. Mumpower for the report.

Committee discussion followed and no advisory action was taken.

c) Review of Proposed Workplan and Budget for FY2024 (discussion + possible advisory action)

Due to time constraints, this agenda item was not heard by the Committee.

The Executive Officer stated staff would solicit comments on the item by email for their individual feedback. The comments received from Committee members by April 20th will be incorporated into the final report to be taken to the Commission at its May 1st meeting.

d) Presentation on SALC Planning Grant (discussion)
Due to time constraints, this agenda item was not heard by the Committee.

The Executive Officer stated staff would work with its co-applicant – Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County – on rescheduling the presentation.

5. LAFCO EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT

None

6. OPEN EXPRESSION

Chair Kimberly Thorner asked if there were any members of the public who wished to address the Committee on a germane topic that is not directly part of the agenda. The Committee Secretary confirmed there were no pre-registered speakers and no live email comments.

No comments or announcements were made by the Committee members present.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Due to the meeting stop-time of 10:30 a.m., the Special Districts Advisory Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:34 a.m.

Attest:

Erica Sellen
Committee Secretary

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AGENDA REPORT
Consent | Information

September 15, 2023

TO: Special Districts Advisory Committee

FROM: Priscilla Mumpower, Assistant Executive Officer

SUBJECT: **Progress Report on the Annual Workplan Activities**

SUMMARY

The Special Districts Advisory Committee ("Committee") will receive a progress report on the commencement of LAFCO's adopted workplan and the 30 special projects set for 2023-2024. Through the first two plus months close to one-half of all workplan projects have been initiated in some substantive manner and marked by eight of the ten high priority projects. The item is provided to the Committee for information only.

BACKGROUND

LAFCO's current fiscal year workplan was adopted at a noticed public hearing held in May 2023. The workplan is multi-year planning tool that is developed and updated annually. The current workplan includes 30 projects and is divided into two distinct categories – statutory and administrative – along with priority assignments set by the Commission.

DISCUSSION

This item provides the Committee with an update on LAFCO's activities through the first two months of the fiscal year in accomplishing workplan projects. This includes noting 14 of the 30 projects set for the fiscal year have been initiated in some substantive manner with one – approving a formal scope of work with a contract consultant to update LAFCO's personnel policies – having been completed. A full status detailing is provided as Attachment One.

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Vista Irrigation

Barry Willis
Alpine Fire Protection

David A. Drake, Alt.
Rincon del Diablo

Andy Vanderlaan
General Public

Harry Mathis, Alt.
General Public

ANALYSIS

None.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is presented to the Committee for information only.

ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION

None.

PROCEDURES

This item has been placed on the Committee's agenda as part of the consent calendar. A successful motion to approve the consent calendar will include taking affirmative action on the staff recommendation unless otherwise specified by the Committee.

Respectfully,



Priscilla Mumpower
Assistant Executive Officer

Attachment:

1) Status Update on Adopted Workplan through September 11, 2023

ADOPTED WORKPLAN FOR FY2023-2024

As Amended

Priority	Level	Type	Project	Description	Status
Ongoing	...	Statutory	Applicant Proposals and Requests	Prioritize resources to address all applicant proposals and related requests	
Ongoing	...	Administrative	Targeted LAFCO Presentations	Coordinate timely public outreach; emphasis on informing stakeholders ahead of MSR work	
Ongoing	...	Statutory	Workplan and Budget Management	Actively manage the workplan and budget resources with quarterly updates to the Commission	
1	High	Statutory	MSR | CWA-MET	Initiate scheduled review of wholesale water suppliers – CWA (comprehensive) and MET (abbreviated)	
2	High	Statutory	MSR | Healthcare Districts	Initiate a comprehensive study of the four healthcare districts in San Diego County	
3	High	Administrative	Recruit, Hire + Support Staff	Ensure all 9.0 budgeted positions are filled in a timely manner with ongoing resource support	
4	High	Administrative	Commissioner Onboarding	Create onboarding resources and related training for new and continuing Commissioners	
5	High	Administrative	Online Accounting	Transition QuickBooks accounting from desktop to online platform + make use of public-facing features	
6	High	Administrative	Policy | Personnel: Part I	Develop and approve scope of work to update personnel policies to reflect best practices	
7	High	Administrative	Policy | Personnel: Part II	Complete comprehensive update of personnel policies	
8	High	Statutory	MSR | Oceanside Region	Complete the scheduled reviews of the City of Oceanside, Oceanside SC Harbor District, and Moreno Hills CSD	
9	High	Statutory	MSR | Carlsbad Region	Complete the scheduled reviews of the City of Carlsbad, Carlsbad MWD, and Leucadia WWD	
10	High	Administrative	SALC Planning Grant 2.0	Initiate two-year grant (contracts, etc.) to expand SALC 1.0 to establish ag costs/revenues with gap analysis	
11	Medium	Administrative	RCD Ad Hoc Committee: Year Two	Report on Year One activities and (b) initiate Year Two activities as determined by the Commission	
12	Medium	Statutory	Policy | Out-of-Agency Services	Complete policy establishment involving the approval process for out-of-agency services (G.C. 56133)	
13	Medium	Statutory	MSR | San Marcos Region	Complete the scheduled reviews of the City of San Marcos, Marcos FPD, & Vallecitos WD	
14	Medium	Statutory	MSR | Vista Region	Complete the scheduled reviews of the City of Vista, Vista ID, Vista FPD, & Buena SD	
15	Medium	Administrative	White Paper | Public Recreation Opportunities	Evaluate potential governance models involving San Diego-owned reservoirs in unincorporated areas	
16	Medium	Administrative	White Paper | Growth Management + Housing	Evaluate growth management policies + connectivity between LAFCO, County, and SANDAG	
17	Medium	Administrative	Special Districts Advisory Committee	Provide administrative support to Advisory Committee and hold no less than three formal meetings in FY	
18	Medium	Administrative	Cities Advisory Committee	Provide administrative support to Advisory Committee and hold no less than two formal meetings in FY	
19	Medium	Administrative	Website Content Expansion	Proceed with content expansion for newly redesigned LAFCO website with multi-media enhancements	
20	Medium	Administrative	2022-2023 Audit	Complete outside audit of financial statements for FY2023	

Priority	Level	Type	Project	Description	Status
21	Low	Statutory	Legislative Proposal | G.C. 56133	Continue work to support amendment clarifying authority to determine out-of-agency service exemptions	
22	Low	Statutory	Policy | Applicant Procedures	Update and streamline application materials and establish protocols in terminating proposals	
23	Low	Statutory	MSR | Encinitas Region	Initiate a regional study covering the City of Encinitas + San Dieguito WD et al.	
24	Low	Statutory	MSR | Del Mar-Solana Beach Region	Initiate a regional study covering the Cities of Del Mar and Solana Beach + Santa Fe ID et al.	
25	Low	Statutory	Legislative Proposal | G.C. 56430	Sponsor and/or facilitate amendment establishing community engagement enhancements in MSR statute	
26	Low	Administrative	Service + Fiscal Indicators	Develop online browser feature to depict service + fiscal indicators among local agencies in San Diego County	
27	Low	Administrative	White Paper | School Districts	Evaluate scope and scale of school districts + their baseline capacities for reference in MSRs	
28	Low	Administrative	Liaison with Local Tribes	Establish communication protocols with local tribes with respect to shared interests in regional services	
29	Low	Administrative	Annual Local Agency Directory	Update and publish an annual local agency directory subject to LAFCO oversight	
30	Low	Administrative	White Paper | Community Choice Aggregations	Evaluate scope and scale of CCAs and their operations in San Diego County and connectivity to LAFCO	
	Bullpen	Statutory	Policy Review | Island Annexations	Consider options to define "substantially surrounded" and provide related mapping services	
	Bullpen	Administrative	White Paper | Garbage Services	Evaluate the scope and scale of garbage collection services and possible governance alternatives	
	Bullpen	Administrative	White Paper | Homeless Services	Evaluate the scope and scale of homeless services and possible governance alternatives	
	Bullpen	Administrative	LAFCO Workshop	Organize a Commission Workshop to discuss core responsibilities + powers and implementing preferences	
	Bullpen	Administrative	Public Access Television	Broadcast LAFCO meetings on local government channels	
	Bullpen	Statutory	MSR | Pauma Valley Region	Initiate a regional study covering the north county special districts in the Pauma/Rincon communities	
	Bullpen	Administrative	SOI/MSR Annual Report	Update and publish an annual report documenting all recorded municipal service review and sphere of influence actions	
	Bullpen	Statutory	Policy | Fee Schedule	Review and update fee schedule to sync with current costs and related considerations	
	Bullpen	Statutory	Policy | CEQA Guidelines	Review and update existing implementing guidelines relative to current statute and best practices	
	Bullpen	Administrative	County Planning Groups	Monitor regular meetings of the County's 28 Planning and or Sponsor Groups and directly engage as appropriate	
	Bullpen	Statutory	Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities	Update DUC mapping designations (DUC) in San Diego County based on current census information	
	Bullpen	Administrative	Local Agency Finder Tool	Develop online feature for users to enter address to identify all overlapping local jurisdictions (cities and districts)	
	Bullpen	Administrative	Southern California LAFCOs	Participate in quarterly meetings with other Southern California LAFCOs and related projects and/or trainings	
	Bullpen	Administrative	CALAFCO	Participate in CALAFCO sponsored programs and related trainings (conferences, workshops, committees, etc.)	
	Bullpen	Statutory	Policy | Commission Rule No. 4	Modernize Rule No. 4 and its provisions to regulate special districts' service functions and classes	
	Bullpen	Statutory	Escondido Region Governance Study	Study options to consolidate (functional and political) the City of Escondido and Rincon del Diablo MWD	
	Bullpen	Administrative	White Paper | JPAs	Evaluate the status of JPA filings in San Diego County relative to LAFCO's task in SB 1261	
	Bullpen	Statutory	Policy | Cities Advisory Committee	Coordinate with CAD in updating bylaws and related procedures to sync with current member interests/priorities	
	Bullpen	Statutory	Policy | Special Districts Advisory Committee	Coordinate with SDAC in updating bylaws and related procedures to sync with current member interests/priorities	

Complete | Near Complete | Underway | Pending

4c

AGENDA REPORT
Consent | Information

September 15, 2023

TO: Special Districts Advisory Committee

FROM: Michaela Peters, Analyst I

SUBJECT: **Report on Active Proposals and Related Activities**

SUMMARY

The Special Districts Advisory Committee ("Committee") will receive a status report on the 30 active proposals currently on file with San Diego LAFCO as well as anticipated filings based on ongoing discussions with proponents. The item is for information and concurrently satisfies LAFCO's reporting requirement involving petition-initiated proposals.

BACKGROUND

Processing Procedures and Timelines

LAFCO proceedings for jurisdictional changes are generally initiated by outside applicants through petitions (landowners or voters), and to a lesser degree by resolutions (local agencies). LAFCOs may also initiate jurisdictional changes to form, consolidate, or dissolve special districts if consistent with the recommendations of approved municipal service reviews. Most jurisdictional change filings take three to five months before they are scheduled for hearing. Applications for outside-of-agency service approvals – which are subject to separate procedures – generally take two months to process.

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General Public

DISCUSSION

This item provides the Committee with an update on active proposals on file with San Diego LAFCO. The item also – and for telegraphing purposes of future workload – identifies pending proposals staff anticipates being filed with LAFCO in the near term based on discussions with local agencies and/or other parties.

All active and pending proposals are outlined in Attachment One.

ANALYSIS

None.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is presented to the Committee for information only.

ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION

None.

PROCEDURES

This item has been placed on the Committee's agenda as part of the consent calendar. A successful motion to approve the consent calendar will include taking affirmative action on the staff recommendation unless otherwise specified by the Committee.

On behalf of staff,

Michaela Peters

Michaela Peters
Analyst I

Attachment:

1) Active and Pending Proposals as of September 11, 2023

	File Number	Proposal Name | Affected Agencies	Project Manager	Proposal Summary
ACTIVE PROPOSAL APPLICATIONS | PENDING COMMISSION ACTION				
1	RO06-17	"Tobacco Road Reorganization" - City of Escondido: Annexation	Staff	Application submitted in March 2006 by landowner petition to annex six parcels to the City of Escondido. The affected territory comprises six parcels located along Tobacco Road. The application filing fulfilled an earlier Executive Officer approval in 2006 to authorize the City of Escondido to extend outside wastewater service to two of the six subject parcels due to failing septic systems. (The other four subject parcels are included in the proposal to provide connectivity to the existing City boundary.) The current number of residents within the affected territory is unknown. The application remains incomplete pending submittal of additional documentation and related information to complete the administrative review. The proposal is subject to formal abandonment pending the anticipated action by the Commission to approve authorizing policies.
2	RO08-09	"South Mollison Ave-Snyder Reorganization" - City of El Cajon: Annexation	Staff	Application submitted in May 2008 by landowner petition for a proposed annexation to the City of El Cajon. The affected territory includes approximately 1.25 acres and is subject to a proposed multi-family residential project. It is unknown whether there are any current residents within the affected territory. The application remains incomplete pending submittal of additional documentation and related information necessary to complete the administrative review. The proposal is subject to formal abandonment pending the anticipated action by the Commission to approve authorizing policies.
3	DA08-10	"Avocado Way-Potter Annexation" - Vallecitos WD: Annexation	Staff	Application submitted in March 2008 by landowner petition requesting annexation of to the Vallecitos Water District (WD) for purposes of receiving public wastewater services. The affected territory comprises two parcels developed with single-family residences located along Avocado Way. The number of current residents within the affected territory is unknown. The application remains incomplete pending submittal of additional documentation and related information necessary to complete the administrative review. The proposal is subject to formal abandonment pending the anticipated action by the Commission to approve authorizing policies.

	File Number	Proposal Name | Affected Agencies	Project Manager	Proposal Summary
4	RO08-15 SA08-15	"Crestlake Estates Reorganization" - San Diego County SD: Annexation - Lakeside FPD: Annexation	Staff	Application submitted in May 2008 by landowner petition requesting a reorganization to accommodate wastewater, fire protection, and ambulance services for an approved Tentative Map allowing the development of 60 single-family residences. It is unknown if there are any current residents. The affected territory lies within all three subject agencies' spheres of influence: San Diego County Sanitation District (SD); Lakeside Fire Protection District (FPD); and County Service Area (CSA) No. 69. The application remains incomplete pending submittal of additional documentation and related information necessary to complete the administrative review. The proposal is subject to formal abandonment pending the anticipated action by the Commission to approve authorizing policies.
5	DA12-02	"Lorch Annexation" - Borrego WD: Annexation	Staff	Application submitted in March 2012 by landowner petition to annex approximately 9.4 acres to the Borrego Water District (WD) to provide water service to one parcel within the District's sphere. It is unknown how many residents are currently within the affected territory. Application deemed incomplete in an April 2012 status letter. A new status letter was sent in January 2018 stating the proposal will be considered abandoned unless notified otherwise. Borrego WD responded to the letter and has reinitiated discussions with the landowner regarding possible service terms. Discussions continue.
6	DA16-10	"CSA 17 Harmony Grove Annexation" - CSA 17: Annexation	Carolanne Ieromnimon	Application submitted in May 2016 by resolution from the County of San Diego to annex approximately 3,600 acres to County Service Area (CSA) No. 17 for ambulance service and done so as a cross-condition of the Commission dissolving CSA No. 107 in 2015. The affected territory is entirely unincorporated and comprises portions of the Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove communities with an estimated resident population of 29,995. The proposal remains incomplete due to a variety of reasons and marked by opposition from the CSA No. 17 Advisory Committee. Staff continues to engage the County, Advisory Committee, and other stakeholders with the objective of fulfilling the Commission's earlier directive.
7	RO16-11	"Rancho Hills Reorganization" - Rancho Santa Fe CSD: Annexation - Olivenhain MWD: Expansion of Latent Power Area - Olivenhain MWD: Latent Sphere Amendment	Michaela Peters	Application submitted in October 2016 to annex a portion of a 37-lot residential subdivision titled "Rancho Hills" to Rancho Santa Fe CSD for wastewater service. A concurrent latent power expansion for Olivenhain MWD is needed to accommodate sewer to the remaining project site. The proposal was deemed incomplete in November 2016 status letter. Applicant has requested the proposal processing be placed on hold. The application is administratively paused due to incomplete and pending receipt of additional documentation and information from the applicant to complete staff's analysis. Communications remain ongoing.

	File Number	Proposal Name | Affected Agencies	Project Manager	Proposal Summary
8	RO19-04	"Ortega – Old Highway 80 Change of Organization" - San Diego County SD: Annexation	Carolanne Ieromnimon	Application submitted in February 2019 by landowner petition to annex approximately 5.07 acres to the San Diego County Sanitation District (SD) for wastewater service. The affected territory comprises two parcels presently developed with single-family residences with an unknown number of residents. The purpose of the proposal is to connect sewer services for a proposed office/warehouse building development. The submitted proposal application is incomplete pending receipt of additional documentation and related information to complete the administrative review.
9	SA19-26 RO19-26 OAS19-26	"Valiano - Eden Valley Reorganization" - City of Escondido: Extraterritorial Sewer - City of Escondido: Sphere Amendment - San Marcos FPD: Annexation - Rancho Fe FPD: Detachment - Rancho Fe FPD: Sphere Amendment	Michaela Peters	Application submitted in November 2019 jointly by landowner petition and the City of Escondido and involves a reorganization and outside-of-agency service agreement as part of the "Valiano" planned development in Harmony Grove. The reorganization involves the concurrent annexation of approximately 10.8 unincorporated acres to San Marcos FPD and detachment from Rancho Santa Fe FPD and related sphere amendments. The outside-of-agency service agreement approval request involves the extension of wastewater from the City of Escondido for approximately 82.9 unincorporated acres with related sphere amendments to add to Escondido and remove from San Marcos. The application is administratively paused due to incomplete and pending receipt of additional documentation and information from the applicant to complete staff's analysis. Communications remain ongoing.
10	CO21-09	"Otay Lakes Road Change of Organization" - City of Chula Vista: Annexation	Michaela Peters	Application submitted in October 2022 by landowner petition to annex approximately 1,870 acres of unincorporated territory to the City of Chula Vista. (The petitioners originally filed an application in October 2021 seeking approval to annex into the San Diego County Sanitation District. This previous application has since been withdrawn.) The affected territory comprises 6 parcels within the Baldwin and Moller communities and are presently undeveloped with no residents. The proposal is intended to facilitate a conditional development approval to construct 1,938 residential units with various ancillary uses as part of the "Otay Ranch Resort Village 13" project. The submitted proposal application is incomplete and pending receipt of additional documentation and information from the applicant to complete staff's analysis.
11	CO22-04	"AJX Homes - Carmichael Change of Organization" - City of La Mesa: Annexation - City of La Mesa: Sphere Amendment	Carolanne Ieromnimon	Application submitted in February 2022 by landowner petition and involves annexation of approximately 0.3 acres to City of La Mesa for wastewater service. The affected territory is developed with a single-family residence and the landowner intends to update the existing site from a septic system to public wastewater system. The submitted proposal application is incomplete and pending receipt of additional documentation and information from the applicant to complete staff's analysis.

	File Number	Proposal Name | Affected Agencies	Project Manager	Proposal Summary
12	RO22-11	"Tummala-Rincon MWD Reorganization" - Rincon del Diablo MWD: Annexation - Metropolitan Water District: Annexation - San Diego CWA: Annexation	Michaela Peters	Application submitted in October 2022 by landowner petition and involves annexation of approximately 20 acres of unincorporated territory to make available public water services. The affected territory is currently vacant and undeveloped. The proposal purpose is to position the landowner to proceed in the future with a development plan with the County of San Diego. The submitted proposal application is incomplete pending receipt of additional documentation and related information to complete the administrative review.
13	CO22-20	"Camino De La Fuente- Wick Change of Organization" -San Diego County SD: Annexation	Carolanne Ieromnimon	Application submitted in November 2022 by landowner petition and involves annexation of approximately 35.3 acres of unincorporated territory to the San Diego County Sanitation District to make available public water and wastewater services. The affected territory is currently vacant and undeveloped. The proposal purpose is to position the landowner to proceed in the future with a development plan to grade the land for future industrial and outdoor storage uses. The proposal is scheduled for consideration by the Commission at its October 2nd, 2023 meeting.
14	RO23-01	"Tucker-Valley Road Reorganization" - National City: Annexation - South Bay ID: Detachment - Bonita FPD: Detachment - Bonita FPD: Sphere Amendment - CSA No. 135: Detachment	Carolanne Ieromnimon	Application submitted in November 2022 by landowner petition and involves annexation of approximately 35.3 acres of unincorporated territory to the San Diego County Sanitation District to make available public water and wastewater services. The affected territory is currently vacant and undeveloped. The proposal purpose is to position the landowner to proceed in the future with a development plan to grade the land for future industrial and outdoor storage uses. The submitted proposal application is incomplete pending receipt of additional documentation and related information to complete the administrative review.
15	RO23-02	"Yerba Valley Road Reorganization" - Lakeside WD: Annexation - San Diego CWA: Annexation - MET: Annexation - Conforming sphere of Influence Amendments	Michaela Peters	Application submitted in February 2023 by resolution from Lakeside Water District to concurrently annex approximately 80.4 acres of unincorporated territory to the Lakeside Water District, San Diego County Water Authority, and Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. The affected territory presently comprises 17 existing single-family residences with no additional planned development. The proposal purpose is to make available public water services given uncertain well water flows within the affected territory. The proposal is currently under administrative review and considered incomplete at this time.

	File Number	Proposal Name | Affected Agencies	Project Manager	Proposal Summary
16	OAS23-03	"Bryant-Felicita Road Outside-of-Agency Service Agreement" - City of Escondido: OAS	Priscilla Mumpower	Application submitted in February 2023 by landowner petition and involves an outside-of-agency service agreement for wastewater services to a single-family residence totaling 0.4 acres as a remedy to a failing septic system. The Executive Officer administratively approved the service request on February 22, 2023. The proposal is currently under administrative review and considered incomplete at this time.
17	RO23-05	"Cambier-W. El Norte Parkway Reorganization" - Vista Irrigation District: Detachment - Vallecitos Water District: Annexation	Carolanne Ieromnimon	Application submitted in March 2023 by landowner petition and involves annexation of approximately 2.53 acres to the Vallecitos Water District to make available public water and wastewater services. The affected territory is currently vacant and undeveloped. The affected territory is presently vacant and undeveloped. The proposal purpose is to position the landowner to proceed in the future with a development plan to create one single-family residence. The proposal is currently under administrative review and considered incomplete at this time.
18	RO23-06	"N. Iris Lane-Hallmark Development Reorganization" - City of Escondido: Annexation - CSA No. 135: Detachment - Rincon del Diablo FPD ID-E: Exclusion	Michaela Peters	Application submitted in April 2023 by landowner petition and involves annexation of approximately 7.7 acres to the City of Escondido for the primary purpose of establishing water and wastewater services. The affected territory is currently developed, with four single-family residences, each with an ADU with plans to redevelop the site to consist of 102 new condominiums units and associated infrastructure/streets. The proposal is currently under administrative review and considered incomplete at this time.
19	RO23-07 (a) & (b)	"Stanley Avenue Reorganization" - City of Escondido: Annexation - CSA No. 135: Detachment - Rincon del Diablo FPD ID-E: Exclusion	Michaela Peters	Application submitted in May 2023 by landowner petition and involves annexation of approximately 7.4 acres to the City of Escondido for the primary purpose of establishing wastewater services. The affected territory comprises 3 separate parcels; one parcel contains 2 preexisting single-family residences with plans of developing an additional 46 residential units, another parcel is presently vacant with plans to develop 20 residential units, and the third parcel is currently developed with an existing single-family residence and included due to expressed interest by the landowners in annexation. The reorganization also includes concurrent detachments from County Service Area No. 135 as well as formal exclusion from Rincon Municipal Water District's ID-E wastewater function. The proposal is scheduled for consideration by the Commission at its October 2nd, 2023 meeting.

	File Number	Proposal Name | Affected Agencies	Project Manager	Proposal Summary
20	RO23-08	"Colina Fuerte-Via Ascenso Reorganization" - Santa Fe ID: Annexation - Olivenhain MWD: Detachment	Michaela Peters	Application submitted in May 2023 by landowner petition and involves annexation of approximately 5.1 acres to the Santa Fe Irrigation District for the primary purpose of establishing potable water service. The affected territory as proposed includes one parcel presently undeveloped with plans to develop a single-family residence along with an accessory dwelling unit. The reorganization will also necessitate detachment from Olivenhain Municipal Water District. The proposal is currently under administrative review and considered incomplete at this time.
21	CO23-09	"City of Carlsbad Change of Organization" - Leucadia WD: Detachment	Carolanne Ieromnimon	Application submitted in July 2023 by resolution from the City of Carlsbad to detach 99.0 acres of incorporated territory from the Leucadia Wastewater District. The affected territory is presently inhabited and developed with multiple residences with no plans for future development. The proposal purpose is to better utilize existing wastewater infrastructure provided by the City of Carlsbad. The proposal is currently under administrative review and considered incomplete at this time.
22	CO23-10	"Glen Abbey Drive-Bonita Road Change of Organization" -San Diego County SD: Annexation	Michaela Peters	Application Submitted in July 2023 by landowner petition and involves annexation of approximately 109.50 acres to the San Diego County Sanitation District (SD) to make available public wastewater services. The affected territory consists of a cemetery and funeral home as well as several mausoleums. The proposal purpose is to position the landowner in the future to proceed with the consolidation of the existing mausoleums into one mausoleum. The proposal is currently under administrative review and considered incomplete at this time.
23	RO23-11	"Nencini Associates-Jonel Way Reorganization" -San Diego County SD: Annexation -City of Chula Vista: Detachment	Carolanne Ieromnimon	Application submitted in July 2023 by landowner petition and involves annexation of approximately 20.6 acres to the San Diego County Sanitation District (SD) with concurrent detachment from the City of Chula Vista for the primary purpose of establishing sewer service. The affected territory is partially developed with one single-family residence, with plans to develop 7 additional single-family residences through subdivision. The submitted proposal application is incomplete pending receipt of additional documentation and related information to complete the administrative review.

	File Number	Proposal Name | Affected Agencies	Project Manager	Proposal Summary
ACTIVE PROPOSALS | POST COMMISSION ACTION				
24	SA16-20 LP16-20	"CSA 135 Islands Reorganization" - CSA 135 – LP Fire Area: Latent Powers Expansion - Bonita-Sunnyside FPD: Annexation - Lakeside FPD: Annexation - San Miguel FPD: Annexation - Ramona MWD: Annexation	Staff	Proposal submitted November 2016 by resolution of the San Diego County Fire Authority. Involved annexation of remaining unserved Islands 2, 3, and 4 via reorganization of local fire service territory among five local agencies: CSA 135; Bonita-Sunnyside FPD; Lakeside FPD; Ramona MWD; and San Miguel FPD. Reorganization involved annexation to the subject agencies and expansion of CSA No. 135's latent powers to provide fire protection and emergency medical services to three unincorporated and unserved island areas totaling approximately 21,048 acres. Conforming amendments to add the affected territory to the subject agencies' spheres of influence were also required. The reorganization proposal was approved February 4, 2018 and is now pending recordation once all terms are satisfied. A noticed protest hearing was held on March 13, 2019 at the LAFCO office. No protest was received by affected registered voters or landowners. Other terms remain pending.
25	LP(E)19-27	"Fallbrook PUD Latent Powers Expansion" - Activation: Park and Recreation - Activation: Street Lighting - Activation: Roads	Priscilla Mumpower	Application submitted in November 2019 by resolution from the Fallbrook Public Utility District (PUD) seeking approval to activate specified latent powers throughout its jurisdictional boundary and its 28,193 unincorporated acres. The estimated resident population within the affected territory is 33,986. Requested power activations involve park and recreation, street lighting, and roads with the former intended to supplement existing park and recreation services provided in the region by the County of San Diego via County Service Area No. 81. The proposal was approved by the Commission on April 4, 2022, and now pending recordation once all terms are satisfied. A noticed protest hearing was held on May 31, 2022 and continued to June 14, 2022 11, 2022 at the Fallbrook Public Utilities District. Not enough protest was received by affected registered voters or landowners. Other terms remain pending.
26	CO22-16	"Cumming Ranch Change of Organization" - Ramona Municipal Water District: Annexation - County Service Area 135: Detachment	Carolanne Ieromnimon	Application submitted in October 2022 by resolution of the Ramona Water District seeking approval for latent power expansion of Ramona MWD's activated wastewater service area by approximately 389 acres. The affected territory is currently vacant and undeveloped. The proposal purpose is to establish wastewater services for the future development of 125 single family residences as part of the "Cummings Ranch Subdivision" project. The proposal was approved by the Commission on May 1st, 2023 and now pending completion of terms and conditions as set forth by the Commission.

	File Number	Proposal Name | Affected Agencies	Project Manager	Proposal Summary
27	CO22-17	"Yung-La Presa Avenue Change of Organization" - San Diego County SD: Annexation	Carolanne Ieromnimon	Application submitted in October 2022 by landowner petition and involves annexation of approximately 0.16 acres of unincorporated territory to the San Diego County Sanitation District to make available public wastewater services. The affected territory is currently developed with 3 residents. The proposal purpose is to position the landowner to proceed in the future with a development plan to add an additional single-family residence. The proposal was approved by the Commission on June 5th, 2023 and now pending completion of terms and conditions as set forth by the Commission.
28	CO22-18	"For Giving LLC- Hymettus Avenue Change of Organization" - Leucadia WD: Annexation	Carolanne Ieromnimon	Application submitted in October 2022 by resolution of the Leucadia Wastewater District and involves annexation of approximately 1.20 acres of unincorporated territory to make available public wastewater services. The affected territory comprises one single family residence in Encinitas and presently vacant with no residents. The proposal purpose is to position the landowner to proceed in the future with a development plan to create two single-family residences. The proposal was approved by the Commission on June 5th, 2023 and now pending completion of terms and conditions as set forth by the Commission.
29	RO20-04	"Rainbow MWD – Eastern MWD Reorganization" - San Diego CWA: Detachment - Eastern MWD: Annexation - Eastern MWD: Sphere Action	Priscilla Mumpower	Application submitted April 2020 by resolution from the Rainbow Municipal Water District (MWD) to concurrently detach from the San Diego County Water Authority (CWA) and annex to the Eastern Municipal Water District (MWD). The affected territory spans approximately 50,857 acres covering the Rainbow and Bonsall communities with an estimated resident population of 22,130. The purpose of the proposal is to transfer the wholesale water supply provider for cost-savings. The submitted proposal application is incomplete pending receipt of additional documentation and related information to complete the administrative review. A 10-member advisory committee has also been established by the Commission to assist staff in evaluating the proposal and its technical merits The proposal was approved by the Commission on July 10th, 2023 and now pending completion of terms and conditions as set forth by the Commission.
30	RO20-05	"Fallbrook PUD – Eastern MWD Reorganization" - San Diego CWA: Detachment - Eastern MWD: Annexation - Eastern MWD: Sphere Action	Priscilla Mumpower	Application submitted April 2020 by resolution from Fallbrook Public Utility District (PUD) to concurrently detach from the San Diego County Water Authority (CWA) and annex to the Eastern Municipal Water District (MWD). The affected territory spans approximately 28,193 acres covering the Fallbrook and De Luz communities with an estimated resident population of 33,986. The purpose of the proposal is to transfer the wholesale water supply provider for cost-savings. The submitted proposal application is incomplete pending receipt of additional documentation and related information to complete the administrative review. A 10-member advisory committee has also been established by the Commission to assist staff in evaluating the proposal and its technical merits. The proposal was approved by the Commission on July 10th, 2023 and now pending completion of terms and conditions as set forth by the Commission.

	File Number	Proposal Name | Affected Agencies	Project Manager	Proposal Summary
PENDING PROPOSAL APPLICATION SUBMITTALS (No project manager; inquiries should be directed to Keene Simonds)				
31	Pending	"Harvest Hills Reorganization" - City of Escondido		This anticipated reorganization proposal is currently undergoing development and environmental review by the City of Escondido. Submittal to LAFCO anticipated for late 2020-2021 if approved by Escondido. The anticipated proposal involves annexation of approximately 1,098 acres to the City for the primary purpose of developing a 550-lot residential subdivision. All of the affected territory presently lies outside the adopted Escondido sphere. Due to the scope of the proposal area a comprehensive update of the City's sphere is warranted along with preparing the supporting municipal service review document. These and other service-related issues have been communicated to the City and are currently under joint review with other local stakeholders. Project was originally titled as "Safari Highlands."
32	Pending	"Rancho Lomas Verde Reorganization" - City of Vista		This anticipated reorganization proposal is undergoing development and environmental review by the City of Vista. The proposal involves annexation of approximately 300 acres to the City of Vista and concurrent detachments from CSA 135 and the Vista FPD to facilitate a 153-lot residential development. Close to three-fourths of the project area lies outside the adopted Vista sphere. Due to the scope of the proposal area a comprehensive update of the City's sphere is warranted along with preparing the supporting municipal service review document. These and other service-related issues have been communicated to the City and are currently under joint review with other local stakeholders.
33	Pending	"Sager Ranch Reorganization" - City of Escondido		This anticipated reorganization involves annexation of approximate 1,800 unincorporated acres to the City of Escondido and concurrent detachments from CSA 135 and the Valley Center FPD. The reorganization would facilitate the proposed development of approximately 200 acres to include 203 residential units and a 225-room resort. Portions of the project area lies outside the current City sphere. Due to the scope of the proposal area a comprehensive update of the City's sphere is warranted along with preparing the supporting municipal service review document. These and other service-related issues have been communicated to the City and are currently under joint review with other local stakeholders.

	File Number	Proposal Name | Affected Agencies	Project Manager	Proposal Summary
34	Pending	"Harmony Grove Village South" (TM-626)		This anticipated reorganization involves the unincorporated Harmony Grove Village South project and specific to accommodating sewer services (among a variety of options) for the planned development of approximately 111 acres to include 453 residential units. On January 27, 2020 the San Diego Superior Court overturned the County's development approvals for the project. Appeals are pending with no update as of this report.
35	Pending	"La Jolla Incorporation" - City of San Diego: Detachment		This anticipated special reorganization involves the detachment of 8,371 acres from the City of San Diego and the incorporation of the community of La Jolla. A draft fiscal impact analysis report is currently underway by the proponents - Association for the City of La Jolla (501c3) – to determine whether La Jolla could obtain cityhood and be economically sustainable on its own. Application is pending.

5a

AGENDA REPORT
Business | Discussion

September 15, 2023

TO: Special Districts Advisory Committee

FROM: Michaela Peters, Analyst I

SUBJECT: **SALC 1.0 Review | Agricultural Trends and Related Policy Opportunities**

SUMMARY

The San Diego Special Districts Advisory Committee ("Committee") will receive a final report tied to LAFCO's two-year $250,000 planning grant from the State of California and its Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) program. The final report and its recommendations – will be presented by co-applicant Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County. Discussion and feedback.

BACKGROUND

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program

SALC was created in 2014 as a component of the California Strategic Growth Council and administered by the Department of Conservation. The SALC program is primarily funded through the California Climate Investments, a statewide program that provides cap-and-trade funds through agricultural conservation acquisition and planning grants for programs intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The principal goals of SALC are stated as:

- Protect at-risk agricultural lands from sprawl development to promote growth within existing jurisdictions, ensure open space remains available, and support a healthy agricultural economy.

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David A. Drake, Alt., Rincon del Diablo
Andy Vanderlaan, General Public
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- Further the purposes of Assembly Bill 32 by avoiding increases in the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the conversion of agricultural land to more greenhouse gas-intensive nonagricultural uses.

Grant Application and Approval | San Diego LAFCO and Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County

In August 2020, San Diego LAFCO and Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County collaborated in submitting a planning grant application under SALC to identify and track agricultural trends in San Diego County. The Commission – notably – authorized the grant proposal as lead applicant. LAFCO was subsequently awarded a two-year grant in the full amount of $250,000 with work commencing in June 2021 through June 2023.

DISCUSSION

This item is for the Committee to receive a final report and related recommendations tied to work performed with partner RCD of Greater San Diego County to track agricultural trends in San Diego County. The analysis underlying the report and its recommendations is outreach-centric and ties together the expertise of multiple public, private, and non-profit collaborators. This includes addressing systemic structures to agricultural and commercial production and related factors contributing to trends. Pertinently, one of the key recommendations is the need for market analysis of individual commodities to help further assess and understand agricultural opportunities going forward. This recommendation – importantly – will be explored as part of a sperate two-year planning grant awarded to LAFCO and the County of San Diego as "SALC 2.0".

A summary of all recommendations follows and will be further detailed as part of the verbal presentation provided by RCD of Greater San Diego County.

1. Assign agricultural liaisons for city and county governments
2. Design lease agreements that invest in working lands
3. Create a regional land use plan to prioritize agriculture
4. Fund growers to transition to low water-use crops and more efficient irrigation
5. Equip and incentivize producers to adopt climate-smart practices
6. Streamline construction of farmworker housing
7. Develop advanced water treatment facilities with priority for agricultural use
8. Inform small farming opportunities through costs and benefits analysis of small farms
9. Expand technical assistance by providing more vocational training
10. Build capacity of farmers and farmworkers with training and services

A copy of the final report is provided as Attachment One.

ANALYSIS

See Attachment One.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is presented to the Committee for discussion and feedback only.

ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION

None.

PROCEDURES

This item has been placed on the Committee's agenda for discussion as part of the business calendar. It will include a verbal presentation followed by discussion from the Committee.

Respectfully,

Michaela Peters

Michaela Peters
Analyst I

Attachment:

1) San Diego Agricultural Planning Program | Final Report

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San Diego Agricultural Planning Program

RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Greater San Diego County

San Diego Agricultural Planning Program

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Grant Program

Final Report

May 2023

Prepared by the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County

On Behalf of the San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission

With Generous Funding from the State of California Department of Conservation

Supported by our Partners in the San Diego Region

For more information, visit the program website:

https://www.rcdsandiego.org/san-diego-agricultural-planning-program

Contact the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County at:

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Executive Summary

This report serves as the culmination of work performed as part of a two-year planning project funded by the State of California's Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) program to identify, map, and assess agricultural lands and key agricultural trends in San Diego County. The project team draws on the expertise of its public, private, and non-profit organization partners with a collective focus to determine effective methods to strengthen agricultural production and achieve policy reform where needed for the benefit of the agricultural industry specifically and the many co-benefits to the region as a whole. This regional analysis describes systemic structures and related barriers; meanwhile, market analysis of individual commodities is still needed. Subsequent efforts by the San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission (SD LAFCO) will build on this planning process by quantitatively analyzing trends and opportunities for different commodity markets to summarize the key costs required to operate an agricultural business in the County.

The program methodology was outreach-centric and built on decades of previous research conducted by the many organizations supporting agriculture in San Diego County. This program was designed with a broad focus on industry viability while ensuring a demographic representation of producers in the region. Mapped lands compiled multiple sources of data, included slopes as arable and included state and federal grazing lands. Outreach efforts included in-person interviews and direct outreach to small-scale farmer associations with added value assigned to agricultural producers as paid professionals. Similarly, to encourage collaboration among stakeholders, contractors and partners, the program incorporated feedback from regional organizations representing agriculture at multiple scales. The program focused on land-based commercial cultivation, therefore major aspects of the agricultural industry were best represented through prior research, most notably: nursery and ornamental production, urban producers, indigenous land management, production in the desert region, and related issues in the food industry.

Regional Context

Agriculture has long been an important part of the local economy in San Diego County. As the region's fifth largest industry, direct economic output from agricultural production recently is $1.75 billion (County, 2021) with a total economic impact of $2.8 billion (County, 2015). San Diego leads the nation in nursery production, organic farming and the number of small farms, but significant challenges threaten long-term viability of the region's agricultural industry.

The moderate climate in San Diego permits production of 200 varieties of locally grown crops (UCCE, 2018) across approximately 219,874 acres or 8% of the County area (County, 2021). Nursery and ornamental production are the lead agricultural commodity, accounting for $1.3 billion, or 74%, of agricultural sales, despite representing only 5% (11,429 acres) of the total crop acreage (County, 2021). Subtropical fruits are another major source of sales, including citrus (8,812 acres, $114,746,057) and avocados (14,458 acres, $82,832,387). Other major commodities include wine grapes, vegetable production, livestock and egg production.

A source of pride for many San Diegans, the County boasts the highest concentration of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Certified Organic farmers in the Country with 376 registered growers generating $71.0 million per year in sales (County, 2021). A high number of uncertified producers use organic methods and practices but find the cost of certification to be an obstacle.

Land reserved for agriculture has fragmented and contracted with each passing decade (FMMP, 1986). For the last thirty years, San Diego consistently ranks in the top ten counties in California with the largest net loss of irrigated farmland (DOC, 2015). Currently, there are 219,874 acres in agricultural production (County, 2021). This has declined from a peak of 371,592 acres in 1986 (FMMP, 1986). The historical area of farms and ranches once exceeded 630,000 acres, however poor records of acreage are kept for extensive coastal dairies, dryland farming, row crops and the globally-renowned floral industry and montane pastures (FMMP, 1986). The cultivated acreage peaked most recently in 2006 and has declined by 30% in the past 15 years (County, 2006). More than two-thirds (69%) of San Diego farms now operate on less than ten acres (USDA, 2017).

Producer Concerns

Working with stakeholders through outreach efforts, policy meetings, and working groups identified ten policy recommendations which span multiple crop types, demographics, and regions of producers across San Diego. These recommendations include:

1. Assign agricultural liaisons for city and county governments
2. Design lease agreements that invest in working lands
3. Create a regional land use plan to prioritize agriculture
4. Fund growers to transition to low water-use crops and more efficient irrigation
5. Equip and incentivize producers to adopt climate-smart practices
6. Streamline construction of farmworker housing
7. Develop advanced water treatment facilities with priority for agricultural use
8. Inform small farming opportunities through analysis of costs and benefits of small farms
9. Expand technical assistance by providing more vocational training
10. Build capacity of farmers and farmworkers with training and services

Pressures on agricultural businesses are intensifying now more than ever. The high expense of imported water and rising land costs from urban encroachment are universal pressures (County, 2009; Appendix 4B). Most producers highlight extreme weather conditions as a major impact to production, with an increase in minimum temperature of >3°F in the last century (Appendix 4B, CA EPA 2018). Regulations for grading and development, environmental review, and labor rates complicate and add expense to production (Appendix 4B). For small farmers, high labor costs, pest management, and marketing are paramount (UCCE, 2018). Other concerns include access to capital, lack of training opportunities, and volatile markets.

As markets develop, producers need support adapting their business to new costs and opportunities. Labor costs continue to rise, while nearby urban markets provide higher premiums for high quality produce and meat (Appendix 4B). Existing regulations can be prohibitive to business, namely state restrictions on overtime and minimum wage laws which paralyze industries that employ seasonal workers or grazers. Environmental permitting is not streamlined, making it expensive to navigate and comply with local and state regulations. State grants provide opportunities to invest in on-farm climate solutions, but applications are too convoluted for producers to complete on their own, spotlighting a need for technical assistance. The local urban market presents a growing opportunity, but producers need additional support connecting to local businesses and institutions to take advantage of the available premium. Turning a weakness into a strength, water scarcity has driven local producers to adopt water conservation measures at a higher rate than most counties in the State (USDA, 2012). However, the rising cost of water has also forced some producers out of agriculture. The results of land conversion and rising water costs are most

visible in the subtropical orchard industry. San Diego was formerly the lead producer of avocados in the country, but total production value and acreage dropped by nearly half from a peak of $153 million to the current $82.8 million, and a peak of 26,000 acres in 2007 to 14,458 acres in 2021 (County, 2021). The decreased avocado yields may also be linked to the increase in hotter and dryer conditions (County, 2021).

Policy Goals

The agricultural stakeholders and supporting organizations involved in this collaborative grant process recommend policy goals at the local, regional, and state levels. Central to each policy proposal is the need for farmers to be actively involved in regional land use policies, and for agriculture to be valued as a critical element of the local culture and economy. Therefore, all levels of government should dedicate agency liaisons to provide direct representation to agricultural producers in order to navigate regulations and funding opportunities. To support this, industry leaders should draft a holistic assessment of the direct and indirect economic impact as well as the co-benefits of the agricultural industry in the region as a value analysis (Appendix 4C). SD LAFCO has taken the lead on this policy recommendation in collaboration with the County of San Diego by renewing this SALC grant for additional analysis of the costs of agricultural production at the farm scale and co-benefits of agricultural communities to the region. A concurrent goal is to help economically diversify production to support the agricultural industry.

To guide regional land use, an agricultural zoning plan is desperately needed. Land use planners should work with producers and other stakeholders to develop an agricultural land use plan interconnected across the entire County to guide future policy development, land use planning and to preserve working lands. Water is a limiting factor to the future of local agriculture. To help preserve San Diego agriculture, water districts should collaborate on future regional funding opportunities to incentivize producer participation in a local CropSWAP program which would support the transition from high water-demand subtropical groves and orchards to drought-tolerant perennials or crops with lower water usage. This model has shown to be successful elsewhere in Southern California. In order to preserve and invest in fertile agricultural lands, farmers and ranchers need access to agricultural reserves as was previously achieved through the Williamson Act. Public agencies should work with agricultural producers to place land in trusts, develop beneficial agreements to lease public lands with historic agricultural use, and incentivize climate-smart practices on those fields. These programs allow the preservation of agricultural lands while protecting farmers from further urban encroachment and drought risk.

Economic policies should be developed to support agricultural producers to adapt to a shifting market. The pipeline for the region's robust agricultural education programs tapers off after high school; training opportunities should support young farmers to learn, stay, and grow in San Diego. This could be accomplished by investing in more horticultural programs at local community colleges and with support from USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. Meanwhile, the workforce should be supplemented by a consistent system for providing permits to seasonal workers to contribute and benefit from the agricultural economy.

Regional agencies should address the formidable cost of living for vulnerable farmworker populations by simplifying permitting and incentivizing the construction of farmworker housing. Participants in the San Diego Food System Alliance (SDFSA) Food Vision 2030 highlighted the need for a pathway to land ownership, coupled with succession planning, mentorship, and marketing support (SDFSA, 2021A). County policy makers could work with local advocates to request a revision at the State level to make labor laws concerning overtime and wages more flexible based on seasonal needs.

Climate conditions have been trending toward extremes. Fortunately, carbon farming practices are available and in use at the farm level which helps to increase storage of carbon in soils, improve water holding capacity and help mitigate heat islands. To adapt to and mitigate climate change impacts, local governments should invest in capacity-building programs to reduce the cost of implementing climate-smart practices. Practices listed in the County's Climate Action Plan (2018) identify the need to increase carbon sequestration, promote sustainably and locally grown food, reduce emissions of equipment used in agriculture and should be supported by local incentives.

Above all, producers are under-represented and need designated staff at government agencies to advocate for them and help them navigate services. With strong representation in place, regional agencies and residents can build momentum and provide the agricultural community with the support that it has earned.

Grant Description

Unique Project Objective

The San Diego Agricultural Planning Program sought to identify, map, and quantify the ownership of active agricultural lands within the San Diego region to determine effective methods to strengthen agricultural production and the growing agricultural economy. To achieve policy reform on gridlocked issues, grant partners sought industry unity through a collaborative approach representing multiple angles of the local agricultural industry. Project methods were informed by the results of previous projects and the needs of the constituents served by the coordinating organizations.

The project design considered previous studies and took a unique approach on a variety of elements. While many SALC projects focus on conservation easements as the primary tool for agricultural preservation, program partners broadened the focus to industry viability in general. As such, agricultural producers were consulted and valued as paid professionals for the time and input they contributed. Contractors and partners included regional organizations representing agriculture at multiple scales, from individual farmworkers to the owners of established operations. This approach addressed gridlock on key issues such as water availability, climate adaptation, land accessibility and agricultural workforce by encouraging collaboration among critical players including agricultural industry associations, government agencies, and community organizations.

A broader definition of farmers and farming expanded the mapping and outreach processes. To better represent the full extent of agricultural lands, the mapping team engaged the ranching community to locate grazing lands, broadened the definition of arable land to include steeper slopes, and combined multiple sources of spatial data. In outreach and policy efforts, collaborators sought a wider demographic representation of producers in the region through in-person interviews and direct outreach to small-scale farmer associations. Outreach results focused on qualitative content to better understand systemic barriers, thus quantitative results lacked statistical strength. For statistical strength, outreach relied on existing studies and reports.

This project was not able to deeply explore all aspects of the agricultural industry, most notably nursery and ornamental production, urban producers, indigenous land management, production in the desert region, and related issues in the food industry. Collaborators instead relied on the results of previous reports which already explored these topics sufficiently.

The following report details how partners advanced the objective of strengthening the local agricultural economy.

Program Funder

This two-year planning grant was funded by the California Department of Conservation (DOC) through the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC). The project is managed by the San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission (SD LAFCO) and coordinated by the Resource Conservation District (RCD) of Greater San Diego County (RCDGSDC) with support from regional partners. The SALC Program was created in 2014 as a component of the California Strategic Growth Council and administered by the DOC. The SALC program is primarily funded through California Climate Investments, which is a statewide program that provides cap-and-trade funds through agricultural conservation acquisition and

planning grants for programs intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). The principal goals of the SALC Program are stated as:

> Protect at-risk agricultural lands from sprawl development to promote growth within existing jurisdictions, ensure open space remains available, and support a healthy agricultural economy.
>
> Further the purposes of Assembly Bill 32 by avoiding increases in the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the conversion of agricultural land to more greenhouse gas-intensive nonagricultural uses.

Beginning in 2019, SD LAFCO and RCDGSDC collaborated with regional partners at the County of San Diego, San Diego Association of Governments, and San Diego County Farm Bureau (Farm Bureau) to submit a SALC planning grant application. SD LAFCO was the lead applicant and was awarded a two-year grant in the full amount of $250,000 in April 2021 with work commencing in June 2021. Funding included administration, staff time, contractor fees and printing costs, with outreach expenses such as venues, travel and refreshments as match funds.

Tasks: Mapping, Outreach, and Policy

The grant included five primary tasks: (1) grant management; (2) mapping and greenhouse gas analysis; (3) collaborative outreach; (4) policy analysis; and (5) strategic planning. Grant management such as reporting and financial tracking was conducted by SD LAFCO throughout the duration of the program. The RCD developed specific outcomes for tasks (2) through (5) at the scale of San Diego County and as described below:

Mapping and Greenhouse Gas Analysis

- Map the extent of historical, current, and potential agricultural lands
- Model the greenhouse gas sequestration potential on agricultural lands

Collaborative Outreach

- Conduct needs assessment with 99 agricultural producers with a focus on under-represented operations in order to identify systemic issues
- Hold two listening sessions with producers representing a variety of crop types, demographics, and regions to discuss major policies which affect systemic issues

Policy

- Inventory policies at local, regional, and state level which affect agricultural operations
- Analyze potential for implementation of new agricultural policies at the local and regional level, prioritized by systemic issues identified in the outreach task
- Host public meetings to discuss existing policies for the prioritized issues including (1) Land Access, (2) Water Availability and Efficiency, and (3) Agricultural Workforce Development
- Host a strategic planning meeting to identify one project for each of the three policy topics, and form stakeholder working groups to be responsible for each project

Advocacy

- Coordinate Working Groups on three priority policy topics of (1) Land Access, (2) Water Availability and Efficiency, and (3) Agricultural Workforce Development

- Compose final report to inform regional policy development
- Design outreach materials for agricultural stakeholders to advocate for policy reform
- Advocate with agricultural stakeholders to the general public and to elected officials to implement prioritized policy reforms

Partners and Acknowledgements

This work is made possible only by the participation of agricultural producers. The Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County appreciates all of the time, input and expertise they shared and we dedicate our efforts to influencing positive regional changes that support them.

The original grant application was skillfully prepared by Dr. Chandra Richards, in coordination with Keene Simonds at SD LAFCO, Hannah Gbeh at the Farm Bureau, Meghan Kelly at the County of San Diego, Amie MacPhee and Serena Unger at the Cultivate Team and former RCDGSDC Executive Director, Sheryl Landrum. We are grateful for our grant manager, Priscilla Mumpower of SD LAFCO, who has gone above and beyond to stay engaged at each level of the project. We are also grateful to Darcy Cook and the Mission Resource Conservation District, for participating as both an outreach and strategic partner. With their support and engagement, we have been able to reach more producers outside of our jurisdiction to create a more holistic vision of what is needed for our regional agricultural community. Along with Mission Resource Conservation District, we had support from our outreach partners at Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP) and Foodshed Inc. who actively contributed to the distribution of the Producer Needs Assessments across our very diverse county.

In addition to our partners, there were many regional contributors to this work.

Agricultural Stakeholders

- Agri Service, Inc
- California Farmlink
- Community Alliance with Family Farmers
- Escondido Growers for Agricultural Preservation
- Foodshed Inc.
- Ramona Valley Vineyard Association
- San Diego County Cattlemen's Association
- San Diego County Cattlewomen's Association
- San Diego County Farm Bureau
- San Diego Food System Alliance
- San Pasqual Valley Soils
- University of California Agricultural & Natural Resources
- Vista Community Clinic - Farmworker Care Coalition

Government Agencies

- California Department of Food & Agriculture
- City of Escondido
- City of San Diego, Council District 5
- City of Oceanside
- County Board of Supervisors District 2
- County of San Diego

    - Planning and Development
    - Agricultural Weights and Measures
    - Land Use and Environmental Group
- Mission Resource Conservation District
- Rainbow Municipal Water District
- Representative of State District 75
- Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County
- San Diego Association of Governments
- San Diego County Water Authority and key member agencies
- San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission
- Temecula Elsinore Anza Murrieta Resource Conservation District
- United States Forest Service
- United States Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Upper San Luis Rey Resource Conservation District

Supporting Organizations

- Adam Wilson – SD LAFCO Policy Consultant
- Community Health Improvement Partners - Farm to Institution Center
- Conservation Fund
- Dudek
- Palomar College
- Ramona Community Planning Group
- San Diego City College
- San Diego Irrigated Lands Group
- San Diego State University - School of Public Affairs
- Southwestern College
- University of California San Diego - Community Health

Summary of Other SALC Projects

RCDGSDC was inspired by the regional planning work of other organizations in California.

- Mendocino County Sustainable Agricultural Lands Strategy – In 2015, the Mendocino County Agricultural Commissioner's Office and the Mendocino County RCD (MCRCD) were funded by DOC and the Strategic Growth Council (SGC) to research their region's untapped and undeveloped agricultural potential. Noting the statewide pattern of land use conversion towards housing and commercial spaces, MCRCD focused on creating a plan that would advocate for the preservation of their agricultural lands. They worked on mapping their region's agricultural extent of lands, gauged the community's interest in identifying spaces for conservation easements, and increased their technical assistance for farmers and ranchers interested in adopting carbon farming practices. In 2020, MCRCD utilized funding from the Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation (SALC) Program to expand upon this work. In addition, they are developing an agricultural component to the county Climate Action Plan, increasing capacity for carbon farm planning and soil health initiatives, and promoting further participation in the Williamson Act and conservation easement programs.

- 2018 Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan – Santa Clara was once known as "the Valley of Heart's Delight" for its abundant agricultural land, but with their proximity to the rapidly expanding Bay Area, land use priorities shifted to support the emerging technology industry. The County of Santa Clara, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, and their partners developed the Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan to emphasize the cultural, ecological, environmental, and economic importance of preserving and protecting existing land for agricultural use. This group identified four focus areas to promote their vision, which were 1) Land Use Policy, 2) Regional Agricultural Conservation Easement Program and Other Financial Incentives, 3) Agricultural Economic Development Strategy, and 4) Branding Education and Awareness Strategy. The initiatives identified in the project are now being implemented, with a focus on agricultural conservation easements.

- 2020 Inland Empire Agricultural Plan – The Local Agency Formation Commission for San Bernardino County, the Inland Empire RCD (IERCD), and their partners received SALC funding during the same round as the San Diego Agricultural Planning Program. Partners are setting out to preserve the San Bernardino region from being entirely developed into industrial warehouses and manufacturing centers. The plan focuses on mapping out a corridor of preserved agricultural lands in the San Bernardino Valley, analyzing city and county policies that affect agriculture, developing an agricultural easement program, and creating a regional agricultural advisory committee. The project will be completed in the Spring of 2023.

Background

Geography and Industry Overview

San Diego County is renowned for its mild climate, beachfront and hilly terrain. The topography of the county varies widely from coastline to canyons, mountains to deserts. With a unique ability to enjoy a year-round growing season, San Diego County hosts over 5,000 farms operating mostly on less than ten acres (USDA, 2017). The various microclimates permit the production of 200 locally grown crops while fostering an active agricultural hub in Southern California (UCCE, 2018).

Before 1986, grazing lands and coastal areas were dominated by agriculture activity expanding over more than 630,000 acres, including land for dairies, dryland farming, row crops, orchards, and the historic nursery industry (FMMP 1986, SDSU Analysis). However, as San Diego County became more urbanized and sprawled, the area of land dedicated to food production declined. Until 2006, urban expansion was partially compensated for with the planting of new avocado orchards in East County, when total agricultural peaked at 315,296 acres (County, 2006). With the decline of the avocado industry, acreage devoted to commercial agriculture is steadily decreasing, with a loss of 4.2% or about 10,000 acres from 2019 to 2020 (County, 2021).

Water supply in the region developed in tandem with population growth. The San Diego County Water Authority (CWA) formed in the 1940's with the purpose of importing water from the Colorado River, linking earlier major investments made by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWDSC) in the Colorado River Aqueduct. Most of the industry is now dependent on an imported water supply, with rates among the highest in the country. The conservation efforts of local farmers have resulted in San Diego County leading the state with adoption of energy and water conservation measures (USDA, 2012). Despite these efforts, since 1994 San Diego County ranked in the top ten counties in California with the largest net loss of irrigated farmland (DOC, 2015).

Economic Impact

Proximity to the Central Valley and the U.S.-Mexico border provides an active market for export and trade. Direct economic output from agricultural production totaled $1.75 billion in 2021 (County, 2021), with a total economic impact of $2.8 billion (County, 2015); in the last census, San Diego County ranked in the 99th percentile (18th out of 3,073) for crop sales in the country (USDA, 2017). Approximately 12,335 farmworkers (County, 2015) are employed by regional operations and an additional 4,313 employees work in supporting businesses (County, 2015). More than 2,000 businesses related to the agriculture sector are within five miles of farms throughout the County (Appendix 4A). The food system in the County employs 217,000 San Diegans and generates more than $35.0 billion in direct sales, as well as indirect and induced outputs from agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing, retail wholesalers and food service (SDFSA, 2021A).

Nurseries are the fastest growing industry and the majority of agricultural income is earned through the sale of nursery products and ornamentals (County, 2021). Of the $1.75 billion in annual production revenue nursery and cut flower production accounts for 74%, even though it represents only 11,429 acres. Common perennial crops include subtropical fruits like avocados and citrus, in addition to vineyards; avocados represent the second largest land use for any agricultural product. Livestock and poultry income is dominated by egg production, while the largest land use is devoted to rangeland.

San Diego is home to 376 certified organic growers, the highest concentration of U.S. Department of Agriculture Certified Organic farmers in the United States (County, 2021). USDA Certified Organic farmers in San Diego generated over $71.0 million in product sales in 2021. Meanwhile, it is common for uncertified producers to use organic techniques to meet the demand of local markets. The USDA describes organic agriculture as the application of a set of cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that support the cycling of on-farm resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity (USDA, 2015).

Social Context

Despite a robust high school agricultural education system, San Diego producers are aging. The average age of producers in the San Diego region in 2012 was 62 years old. Compared to 2007, fewer multi-generational families are continuing the farming and/or ranching professions, representing a 14% decrease in farms (USDA Census, 2012). Farm ownership and management is not exclusive to any one ethnicity. However, the majority of farms in San Diego are owned by Caucasians (USDA, 2017) while the majority of farmworkers in California are Latino (USDL, 2022). A higher proportion of producers are males (59%; USDA, 2017), with a 4-year college education or higher degrees, and those with an income outside of farming; however, San Diego women are leaders in farming and marked by the County ranking second statewide for the number of woman-run farms (UCCE, 2018). As the current farmers age and retire, there is a major opportunity for them to mentor the next generation of farmers in the County. Beginning farmers represent a wide range in ethnicities and income levels in the County and would benefit from training, access to land and capital, and marketing support.

Historically, farmland was easier to access, and the demographics of farm owners were therefore more representative of the population. Price inflation from urban encroachment and discriminatory policies for land ownership compounded to shift the profile of the average grower in the United States. Project New Village collaborated with San Diego State University to illustrate how the Good Food District in Southeast San Diego was and can be a center for food traditions based on its inherent diversity (Joassart-Marcelli, 2018). The Ito Family is of Japanese descent and raised celery and tomatoes in Southeast San Diego in the early 1900's under the label 'Encanto Hill', alongside neighboring farms owned by Mexican, African-American and Filipino families. In another example, Dr. Caroline Collins describes in the series 'We Are Not Strangers Here' how the growth and development of the agricultural community of Julian accelerated rapidly in the late 1800's as African-American settlers invested in local industries, building off of relationships with indigenous communities (Collins, 2022). The diversity of the agricultural industry is now represented by diversity of local crops, broad technical knowledge and variety of food traditions, but no longer in terms of farm ownership.

High San Diego land and water costs, the latter of which are rising faster here than anywhere else in Southern California, are driving many farmers to halt agricultural production and, in some cases, sell their lands. A shortage of labor and complex farming regulations on local, state, and federal levels also contributes significantly to financial stress for the local agricultural community and therefore significant loss of agricultural land. The high cost of land and competition for alternative land uses makes the cost of entry prohibitive for beginning farmers and ranchers. The San Diego County Food Vision 2030 explores how to achieve social equity in the local food system. One outcome has been a study on community wealth-building, which is supporting fledgling agricultural operations to develop business plans which share ownership while increasing access of fresh produce to local communities (SDFSA 2021b). Within the agricultural industry, investment in agricultural land trusts could increase access to farmland for beginning farmers and cooperatives.

Indigenous Land Management

San Diego County is home to 18 federally-recognized tribal reservations belonging to the Kumeyaay, Luiseño, Cahuilla and Cupeño people, whose members have stewarded the land since time immemorial. Tribal farmers actively produce food through large-scale agricultural operations throughout the County. A more applicable definition of agriculture should be broadened beyond export-oriented food production. Indigenous land management practices include managing food-bearing landscapes such as oak woodlands, grasslands and freshwater marshes which have sustained native people in this region for millennia. United States agencies are beginning to recognize the immense value of these indigenous land management practices including selective harvest, prescribed burning, and check dams with interest in supporting and expanding these traditional practices. While the focus of this program is conventional agriculture, many individuals and organizations involved actively support the leadership of native peoples and the reintroduction of traditional management practices to rejuvenate the land and the native people who are its stewards.

Regional Players

To achieve policy reform on gridlocked issues, program partners actively encouraged collaboration from multiple perspectives of the local agricultural industry. Agricultural stakeholders informed the core of the outreach and policy efforts, while government agencies and community organizations were involved to provide additional structure and resources. When this project began in 2021, the most active agricultural stakeholders in the region included the Farm Bureau, San Diego County Cattlemen's Association and Cattlewomen's Association, Escondido Growers for Agricultural Preservation (EGAP), Foodshed Inc., and Vista Community Clinic. Actively engaged government agencies included the County of San Diego Agricultural Weights and Measures (AWM), SD LAFCO, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), San Diego County Water Authority (CWA), Mission RCD, Upper San Luis Rey RCD, RCDGSDC, and Regional Water Quality Control Board Region 9. Actively engaged supporting organizations included UCCE, San Diego Food System Alliance, Community Health Improvement Partners, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, and UC San Diego Community Health.

Meanwhile, jurisdictions with the largest proportion of agricultural stakeholders included the County of San Diego, City of San Diego, City of Escondido, and the City of Oceanside. In addition to the CWA, the member agencies with the largest proportion of agricultural stakeholders include City of San Diego, Fallbrook Public Utilities District, Rainbow Municipal Water District (MWD), Yuima MWD, Valley Center MWD, Rincon Del Diablo MWD, Vista Irrigation District, and Ramona MWD, among others. Additional governments and agencies who own large tracts of farmland or rangeland include the County of San Diego, San Diego Gas and Electric Company, CA Department of Transportation, CA State Parks, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), US Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Department of Defense, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service and several tribal nations.

In the San Diego Agricultural Planning Program, program partners explored how a framework including each of these types of groups could advance a particular policy issue to demonstrate how progress can be made at a larger scale. Each of these organizations listed above plays a critical role in representing or serving the agricultural community. However, issues beyond the agricultural industry such as land use, water supply, and labor laws increased collaboration among these groups. For regional issues, discussion with these diverse groups will allow for more effective progress.

The involvement of private individuals and businesses is important to shape the future of agriculture; farms on the edge of urban centers, often referred to as peri-urban, can have a mutually beneficial

relationship with nearby cities. Private landowners affect environmental regulations, housing availability, and zoning for nearby farms through neighborhood policies, consumer choices and property sales. Individual businesses, developers and planners have a responsibility to consider the vital role of agriculture in the development and growth of urban planning. Similarly, local consumers have major buying power with unique access to a food system that provides a diverse selection of products year-round. By consuming local produce, San Diegans not only benefit from access to high quality local foods, but support beneficial land management practices, access to conserved lands and a historic cultural identity.

History of Regional Policies

The County of San Diego has taken the lead on assessing the status of agricultural policy in the County, with periodic reports and initiatives on a variety of topics. In 2005, the County held listening sessions in collaboration with the Farm Bureau and shared the results in a 2009 report, "San Diego County Farming Program Plan". The effectiveness of this process was mixed, with some current programs like the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) stemming from this effort, while proposed regulatory assistance and industry development programs have not been realized. An advocacy group took on the effort themselves in 2012 when EGAP analyzed the costs of production and the need for an affordable water supply to support the region's avocado industry (EGAP, 2012). The question of economic viability is at the core of most conversations about the future of agriculture, and the County of San Diego addressed this directly in their 2015 report on the direct and indirect economic impact of agriculture on the local economy (County, 2015).

Water supply has historically been the limiting factor for agriculture in the region, making water conservation a priority policy. Following a major drought in the early 1990's, the CWA shifted purchasing from the MWDSC based in Los Angeles to the Imperial Irrigation District in Imperial Valley by investing in conservation measures on Imperial Valley farms. Regional water agencies continue to invest in drought preparedness through the Agricultural Water Rate; 2,000 local producers are currently enrolled in this program (SDCWA, 2023). This program reduces the water rate by 25% for agricultural compared to water for residential and commercial customers by removing fees for infrastructure for surface storage, desalination or conveyance from Imperial Irrigation District. In exchange, the participating producer accepts a lower level of water supply reliability during drought conditions.

Policy implementation in support of agriculture gained a surge of energy in 2017, when the County developed the Agricultural Promotion Program (County, 2017). This effort streamlined existing regulations to make it easier and cheaper for supporting businesses like wineries, bee-keepers and cheese-makers to operate. During the course of this project, several new policies have been advanced by the County to deregulate and invest in agriculture, such as the Agricultural Pass Program for emergency events and the Organic Materials Ordinance for composting facilities. The County developed a Climate Action Plan (CAP) in 2018 which emphasized the importance of agriculture in the region, referenced the potential to sequester carbon on working lands and encouraged agricultural land easements, machinery electrification and tree planting as opportunities to reduce agricultural emissions. The County CAP is currently being revised to enforce the implementation of reduction measures and will emphasize the potential to sequester carbon on working lands through the implementation of specific "carbon farming" practices.

The impact of climate change on agriculture and the opportunity to mitigate its effects have been a major focus for regional study. California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment for the San Diego Region was conducted by UC San Diego in 2018 and projected the impacts and opportunities on working lands

(Kalansky et al., 2018). SDFSA led a study about the potential for carbon sequestration on San Diego agricultural land and the Climate Action Plan as a vehicle for its implementation (SDFSA, 2018). Climate Science Alliance and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) analyzed the impact of climate change on Southern California specialty crops, including strategies needed to help farms adapt to new conditions (CSA, 2020). In 2022 the County of San Diego used the Regional Decarbonization Framework to analyze the opportunities for sequestering carbon on Working Lands (County, 2022A).

Community groups have filled the gap left by most of these institutional efforts by conducting a deeper analysis of equity and social justice within the agricultural industry. In 2018, Project New Village collaborated with San Diego State University to illustrate how the Good Food District in Southeast San Diego was and can be a center for food traditions based on its inherent diversity (Joassart-Marcelli, 2018). The most direct efforts by government institutions have included analyses of the Food System by UC Davis (2010) and the County of San Diego (2019). At the State level, the National Young Farmer's Coalition explored the policy concerns for beginning farmers statewide (NYFC, 2019). The Coalition concluded that land access was the most critical issue limiting beginning farmers from developing their farm businesses. SDFSA developed the San Diego County Food Vision 2030 which involved members from all strata of the food industry to explore how to address issues of environmental justice, climate change, and system resilience through an equity lens (SDFSA 2021A). This program now hosts annual gatherings to engage the community in workshops, panels and discussions as they develop a central resource hub for underserved farmers, fishers and restaurant owners in the region.

Municipalities across the County have adapted policies as the primary land use has transitioned from primarily agricultural to primarily urban, especially in the south and west of the County. The most popular farmland conservation program was the Williamson Act, which paid producers to keep their land in agriculture for a 10-year period, subject to renewal. Without continued State or local funding this program has been removed, replaced by conservation easement programs offered by the County PACE, State SALC and Federal NRCS. The City of San Diego implemented agricultural conservation on a major scale when it created the 14,000 acre San Pasqual Valley Agricultural Preserve in 1964 in order to achieve water management goals. The 1995 San Pasqual Valley Plan detailed specific measures to conserve natural resources and protect agricultural production such as groundwater management and farmworker housing (City, 1995). Current leases in the Preserve do not take into account the needs of agricultural producers, with leases stuck on a month-to-month renewal, lack of investment in farmworker housing, declining groundwater availability and no direct City representative with fluency on agricultural topics. These issues and others necessitate a revision and implementation of this plan.

The State of California has pioneered climate change legislation through regulations and incentives programs. To support soil health practices, CDFA launched the Healthy Soils Program in 2017 which is funded by uses Cap-and-Trade proceeds from California Climate Investments. The Healthy Soils Program incentivizes producers in San Diego and statewide to implement practices like compost application, hedgerow planting and prescribed grazing. Furthermore, California Senate Bill 1383 regarding Organic Waste Reductions went into effect on January 1, 2022 and intends to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases by diverting away from landfills at least 75% of the organic waste produced each year (County, 2022B). Agriculture is a major potential sink for the nearly 3.5 million tons of organic material produced each year and the proximity of farms to urban centers in San Diego could make this an efficient system. Building soil organic matter can help farmers both mitigate and adapt to climate change by sequestering carbon in the soil, while reducing the direct effects of climate change to the farm by improving soil health and retaining soil moisture (Libohava et al., 2018).

Key Findings

The initial tasks 2 through 4 of mapping and greenhouse gas analysis (Task 2), collaborative outreach (Task 3) and policy analysis (Task 4) produced key findings which informed strategic planning (Task 5). The findings for the extent of agricultural lands below describe the total historic, current and potential area of agricultural production, including breakdown by commodities. The current extent was used to estimate existing carbon sequestered on agricultural lands. The findings for the producer outreach describe the methodology for the producer needs assessment and two listening sessions. Major themes which affect producers are described separately, including the status of programs addressing climate-smart agriculture and the complexities of the relationship between agricultural producers and government agencies. The concerns of individual producers are grouped and explored through systemic issues. Finally, the policy analysis based on these concerns is analyzed for the jurisdictions with a high proportion of agricultural land, including an inventory of existing policies affecting agriculture and the degree of their adoption across different areas.

Extent of Agricultural Lands

RCDGSDC worked with graduate students and faculty from the School of Public Affairs at San Diego State University to map the historical, current and potential extent of agricultural lands. Spatial data for historical lands was limited to the mid-1980's, with the exception of historic ranches that extended further. Changes over time showed a near complete elimination of agricultural land along the coast, and a vast reduction in the amount of actively grazed rangeland (Farley et al., 2017).

The USDA Census has record of more than 5,000 principal operators in San Diego County, more than any county in the United States (USDA, 2017). Meanwhile, approximately 1,300 farmers are enrolled in the San Diego Irrigated Lands Group (comm. Farm Bureau). This mapping activity focused on mapping the spatial extent of agricultural lands, but did not rectify the discrepancy between reported numbers of producers. Regardless, the County ranks as one of the highest concentrations of principal farm and ranch operators in the state and the country.

Findings for current agricultural lands show 276,877 acres currently in production, based on combined data from County AWM, SANDAG, CA DOC and a variety of agencies and private owners of rangelands. These data sources were compared and combined to estimate the lands currently under cultivation; for comparison, the County of San Diego reports 219,874 acres in production (County, 2021). Rangelands are owned and managed by a multiplicity of public agencies and private owners, resulting in chronic under-reporting of total grazed acreage. Special effort was spent on mapping rangelands by actively seeking out and verifying spatial data for individual agencies and private owners of rangelands to include in the total. The largest current land use was rangeland (164,000 acres), followed by fruit and nuts (54,000 acres), vegetable crops (38,000 acres), nurseries, greenhouses and ornamentals (13,000 acres) and vineyards (1,560 acres); for comparison, the County of San Diego reports land use of rangeland and field crops (179,088 acres including 176,173 acres of rangeland), followed by fruit and nuts (26,014 acres), nurseries and cut flowers (11,429 acres), and vegetable and vine crops (3,342 acres including 986 acres of vineyards)(County, 2021). Agricultural lands were primarily located in the jurisdictions of the County of San Diego, followed by City of San Diego, Carlsbad, Encinitas, Escondido, Oceanside, Poway, San Marcos, Santee and Vista.

Historic cropland area was recorded beginning in 1986, when acres in production totaled 371,592 acres (FMMP, 1986), including 160,230 acres of rangeland and 211,362 acres of cropland. By 1986, massive

swaths of coastal farmland and backcountry rangeland had already been taken out of production. To estimate the extent prior to 1986, spatial analysts added maps of ranches active prior to 1986, expanding the area dedicated to agriculture to more than 630,000 acres; historic coastal production was not estimated due to a lack of available spatial data. To illustrate this reduction in agricultural land, 263,788 acres of rangeland that were grazed prior to 1986 were no longer active in 2018, including historic ranches and BLM lands. Peak acreage along the coast is not recorded nor mapped, but was highly significant for dairies, dryland farming, row crops, subtropical orchards and the globally-renowned floral industry (FMMP, 1986).

The refined understanding of the extent of current agricultural lands was used to create additional spatial products, including maps of potential agricultural land, agricultural businesses, and carbon sequestration potential. Potential agricultural lands considered non-urban lands not currently being cultivated, based on an analysis of land use, slopes, and soil types. These included non-urban lands on loamy soils throughout the County on slopes below 30-degrees, based on input from technical assistance providers and agricultural producers in the region. The dominant soil type in San Diego is a sandy loam, while soils dominated by clay or cobble are generally less productive for agriculture. The diverse topography in San Diego means that local producers regularly cultivate steep slopes for orchards or terrace vegetable production, while managed grazing is a common practice on slopes of up to 30-degrees. Whereas NRCS excludes any land for farming on greater than 15-degree slopes, this study expanded the definition. Slopes less than 15-degrees were deemed suitable for most agriculture including row crops and orchards, and slopes less than 30-degrees were deemed feasible for managed grazing. Results show that potential agricultural land represents the potential for expansion of more than 50% beyond the current cultivated area.

Urban lands were excluded for the purpose of the analysis because they are heavily fragmented and difficult to distinguish from landscape vegetation using spatial data. Instead, SDSU assessed the number of businesses related to the agricultural industry by mapping the addresses of North American Industry Classification System businesses within five miles of a current agricultural operation. The resulting more than 2,000 businesses demonstrated showed how ubiquitous the agricultural industry is and the vast support it provides to the regional economy, consumers, and culture.

The map of current extent was used to estimate the baseline stocks of carbon already sequestered on agricultural lands in the County. Dudek was contracted to employ a methodology from the San Diego Association of Governments Carbon Storage and Sequestration Study (SANDAG, 2022) which calculated the total non-soil and carbon stock values for defined commodity types and grazing land cover types; this was the same methodology used for the Terra Count model in San Diego. Grazing lands were then subdivided into categories based on vegetation and land cover types from the SANDAG 2022 study data. Total carbon stock values were assigned to each agricultural commodity type and each grazing land cover type in metric tons carbon per acre (MT C/acre). Carbon stock values included both soil values and non-soil values, where the latter was comprised of live plant material above ground, dead plant material above ground, and live organic matter below ground.

An estimated 6,510,894 Metric Tons CO2e (MTCO2e) is estimated to be stored on the existing approximately 246,369 acres. One MTCO2e equates to 113 gallons of gas consumed or 2,312 kilowatt hours of energy use (USEPA, 2023). Thus, this storage equates to 1,448,871 gas-powered vehicles being driven in one year (23 miles per gallon fuel economy driven 11,520 miles) or 820,592 homes' energy use for one year (USEPA, 2023). Grazing lands contain the greatest volume of stored carbon per acre, followed in net storage by orchards and field crops. SDFSA estimated the potential for carbon sequestration on agricultural lands to be 234,000 MTCO2e/year if conservation practices such as compost application,

hedgerow planting and cover cropping were fully implemented on all agricultural lands (SDFSA 2018). The calculated emissions of the local agricultural industry equal 163,696 MTCO2e/year; the SDFSA estimate indicates the potential to sequester 40% more than is currently emitted until potential storage is saturated. These estimates do not account for the potential to expand agricultural production as described above.

Producer Needs Assessment

Methodology

Outreach partners distributed a Producer Needs Assessment based on the 2018 Grower Needs Assessment, which was prepared and distributed by University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE, 2018). Outreach partners included Darcy Cook at Mission RCD, Bea Alvarez and Hernan Cavazos at Foodshed Inc. and Toni Kraft at the CHIP Farm to Institution Center. UCCE and the County of San Diego Land Use and Environmental Group provided feedback on the assessment content created by the RCDGSDC prior to distribution. Three eligibility criteria were required for producers to take the assessment. Producers must have (1) owned, managed or worked for a commercial agricultural operation within the boundaries of San Diego County, (2) worked in agriculture within the last ten years, and (3) worked in agriculture for at least three consecutive years. Questions included demographics, a profile of the operation and business, ranked impacts and concerns, conservation practices and support needed. The qualitative format, availability of partners to conduct the assessment in-person, and translation services allowed for more substantive answers regarding the future of agriculture in San Diego.

Outreach partners distributed the assessment between January and March 2022. RCDGSDC staff coordinated the outreach effort, including Outreach Coordinator Codi Hale and Agricultural Specialist Joel Kramer, and RCDGSDC Intern Jessica Blasjo uploaded the assessment to an online format. To ensure a wide range of producers could participate, the assessment was offered in both English and Spanish, online, through a mailer, over the phone with program partners or in-person at a location of the producer's choice. Offering the assessment both remotely and in-person provided allowed for in-depth qualitative data about producer concerns and policy proposals. Producer contacts were primarily gathered from partner organizations and the County AWM registry of producers. A concerted effort was made to include demographics of the agricultural industry who were under-represented in the USDA Census (2017) and the UCCE Grower Needs Assessment (2018), such as beginning farmers, urban farmers, farm workers, producers who identified as an ethnic minority, and producers who did not possess a college degree.

Maintaining producers' privacy was a major priority for the assessment. All digital submissions were secured in a password-protected document with access restricted to RCDGSDC program staff. When Outreach Partners conducted a direct assessment, the hard copy was submitted directly to RCDGSDC and/or a copy uploaded to a password-protected folder. When reporting findings, any producer information shared is stripped of personal identifiers such as the name of the producer, their contact information or address.

Results

A variety of agricultural operations throughout the County were represented by the 99 producers who responded to the assessment (Appendix 4B). The typical farm size was less than ten acres (75% of participants), and more than two thirds were five acres or less (69%). Two thirds of participants were located in the North and Central portions of the County. Nearly half (46%) of participants produced

subtropical fruits such as avocados or citrus. In terms of age, two-thirds were 50 or older and nearly one third were between 30 and 50 years. About one third of participants were women. One quarter of producers identified as people of color.

The assessment suggested factors which could affect the productivity of agricultural operations, with insight from the UCCE Assessment (2018). These included soil fertility, water quality, water availability, pests or diseases, the need to convert to new crop types, or extreme weather such as frost, heat stress, fire, drought or flooding. Participants were asked to select three factors and could suggest a different topic affecting operation productivity. They then ranked the three factors in the order that affected them most severely. The primary factor affecting productivity was water availability (35.4%), followed by extreme weather (23.2%). More than 10% of participants reported their top productivity concern was water quality or was pests or diseases, at 11.1% of respondents each. Among the 64 producers who did not select water availability as their top concern, soil fertility was relatively important, selected by 10.9% of producers who responded.

The assessment also suggested factors which could affect the profitability of agricultural operations. These included input costs, market prices, water prices, land costs, labor management, access to capital, and laws and regulations. Participants were asked to select three factors and could suggest a different topic affecting operation profitability. They then ranked the three factors in the order that affected them most severely. The primary factor affecting profitability was high water prices (36.4%), followed by market prices (23.2%). More than 10% of participants reported their top profitability concern were laws and regulations, labor availability or land access, at 10.1% of respondents each. Input costs were relatively important for productivity, and were ranked second by 15.6% of 90 producers who responded.

Listening Sessions

Outreach partners conducted in-person listening sessions to explore the concerns presented in the assessment. Producers who took the assessment were invited to attend listening sessions, and outreach partners also invited select producers to ensure a diversity of operation types and demographics. At each session, producers were randomly placed in breakout groups facilitated by representatives from RCDGSDC, Mission RCD, Foodshed Inc. and CHIP Farm to Institution Center. Sixteen producers attended the February listening session in Lakeside; these were primarily small-scale farmers and mid-scale livestock producers. The first listening session focused on the issues affecting producers most severely and discussed examples of successful models for agricultural systems to guide the vision of an agricultural economy that is growing, adapting and integrated. Eleven producers attended the May listening session in Escondido, the majority of whom were subtropical fruit growers operating on over 15 acres. The second listening session focused on the issues affecting producers most severely and identified existing policies which exacerbate those issues.

The concerns which producers shared are described in a later section on systemic issues.

Relationship between Government and Producers

Producers have a complicated relationship with government agencies. For example, technical assistance providers, like NRCS, historically offered a faster response time to inquiries and had more topical experts available. Regulatory agencies like the County of San Diego previously provided more support programs such as equipment rental and seed subsidies, but site inspection and permitting have come to reshape this relationship in recent years. Meanwhile, many state programs are providing ample funding for

conservation practices, but grant applications are unnecessarily complicated and too time consuming for the average producer. Existing regulations can be prohibitive to business; these include environmental review for developing new structures, labor compliance for wages and overtime which do not match seasonal needs of the industry. Agency staff and regulatory bodies rarely have staff with experience of operating a farm or ranch, restricting communication about regulatory guidance and the potential impact of support programs. Producers strongly request dedicated agricultural liaisons throughout municipal and county departments to bridge these gaps in knowledge and communication.

These dynamics and potential solutions are explored more in the section on Proposed Policy Actions.

Systemic Issues

A diverse ecosystem of organizations is actively working to address these many issues. Most prominently, the Farm Bureau plays a critical role keeping local officials informed about the needs of the agricultural industry. The agricultural industry offers a variety of co-benefits to the economic, cultural and conservation goals of the region. Unfortunately, advocacy efforts for agriculture are often stymied as growers' concerns are often viewed by the general public as solely industry problems. In fact, most of these problems are symptoms of the growth and structure of the region. For local leaders to fully address these individual needs in a holistic manner, they must be characterized in the context of wider trends. During the assessment and listening sessions, producers expressed their concerns about impacts to their individual operations. These concerns are synthesized into systemic issues affecting the whole industry.

Communication of these issues is the first barrier. The agricultural community and support systems are fragmented among industry sectors, technical assistance providers, advocacy groups and government agencies, resulting in missing opportunities for collaboration and growth. Agricultural producers repeatedly commented during assessment interviews, listening sessions and policy planning meetings that feel that they lack a central voice to advocate for the needs of the farming community and also lack direct representation within local government.

The cost of production in today's economy is unrecognizable from the days when San Diego's avocado and citrus groves were first planted. Critical components like land, water and labor are now extremely expensive, driven by the cost for surrounding urban consumers and residents. Land prices are far too high for agricultural lease and for purchase, while limited capital is available to support the purchase of land for beginning farmers. Low wage labor is largely unavailable as agriculture cannot compete in terms of cost or work conditions with other industries. Educational programs are available for beginning farmers, but agricultural degrees are only offered outside of the County, driving most young agricultural professionals to leave the County for education and not return as they look for work elsewhere. Water costs in San Diego are among the highest in the nation; the expense is largely due to the cost of imported water as the MWDSC and the CWA must construct and maintenance infrastructure to convey, treat and store water for the region. Approximately 10% of this cost can be attributed to management by local water districts. Meanwhile, water sourced from by the Colorado River is decreasing in availability, while the high salt content requires additional treatment as it is conveyed downstream. Water efficiency is already implemented by many producers, but there is a need for more technical support and a dedicated water supply for agricultural use. Input costs are sporadically rising, such as fertilizer and fuel, and are influenced by global economic trends or supply chain interruptions. Producers have enough to concern themselves with to grow their commodities, and need support for sales, marketing, and business development to receive the full value for their goods.

Just two generations ago, the core culture in San Diego was agriculture. As urban areas sprawled into agricultural communities, residents largely lost their appreciation for the cultural value of agriculture. Consumers drive what producers grow, how they manage their land, and what policies affect production. Unfortunately, producers feel unsupported by residents and most resort to selling their products to wholesale or export markets at a minimal rate. Government regulators and policymakers who manage agricultural lands or enforce agricultural policies often lack farming fluency and struggle to communicate with producers or to understand the limitations of agricultural production. Poor communication has spin-off effects of impeding projects on agricultural lands, missing opportunities for state investment and building animosity between agricultural businesses and public servants. Decades ago, state and federal agency budgets allowed for enough employees to provide technical assistance upon request; today, a lack of technical assistance providers leaves producers waiting for weeks, or on their own altogether.

Agricultural businesses maneuver costly hurdles posed by regulations from multiple levels of government. Complying with record-keeping and procedures for environmental regulation can be rigorous, demanding too much time from a small farm business with limited staff. Furthermore, the permitting process is not consolidated among government departments, forcing producers to contact multiple departments to complete an individual project, such as building permitted farmworker housing. Without designated agricultural liaisons to help producers navigate the regulatory process across multiple agency departments, many farm projects stop short of being implemented. Large swaths of farmland and grazing land are owned by local, state, and federal agencies, but a lack of transparency makes the process for beginning farmers and ranchers to apply for a lease cumbersome or altogether inaccessible. State environmental regulations do not necessarily match other counties in California concerning development of land for agricultural use, given the unusually high biodiversity of the San Diego landscape. At the state and federal level, laws for overtime and wages attempt to match similar industries, but workers largely favor less demanding work and farm owners struggle to pay the higher rates for seasonal or year-round labor. Market prices greatly affect the already narrow margins of wholesale production; when local producers cannot meet prices for milk, avocados and other commodities set by national and international industry associations, San Diego loses the value that producers offer to the local economy through co-benefits of food production, employment, and land stewardship.

Looking to the future, a holistic agricultural system would have myriad of benefits for our society. During listening sessions, producers shared their motivations for working in agriculture and their vision for a thriving agricultural community. Motivations include a desire to communicate the appreciation of agriculture, heritage and lifestyle, health and increased access to food, business ownership and income generation, and environmentally sustainable land management practices. A thriving agricultural community which satisfies these motivations would have direct contributions to our region's wellbeing. Producers expressed the desire that neighboring communities would take interest in and care about their local farms. Growers would be connected to local consumers for wholesale use of local produce and direct purchase. The community would hire producers for essential services, such as using grazing of cattle, goats, or sheep as a tool for fire prevention and soil health management. The basic health of farm workers would be supported through comprehensive healthcare services, quality housing and safe working conditions. Producers would support one another by sharing labor and equipment, improved by access to centralized infrastructure. Agricultural vocational training would be available for specific in-demand skills, while San Diego colleges would offer degrees in agriculture to prevent brain drain. Regional and local governments would incentivize landowners to lease land to local farmers. Veteran farmers would have a platform to mentor the next generation of producers, while decision makers would reserve a seat at the table for farmers to share their essential perspective. Some of these aspirations are already in development today, but the agricultural community needs broad support to make them a full-fledged reality.

Climate Programs

Extreme weather was the second-highest ranked productivity concern, after water availability. Farmers operating on one to five acres were more concerned and affected by both water availability and extreme weather, like droughts and freezes, whereas farmers managing 30 acres or more were most concerned with having ample water supply to support their working land. Fortunately, several existing programs have already gained momentum with programs at the regional and state levels addressing climate impacts. Therefore, RCDGSDC chose not to focus proposed policy efforts on climate.

Several funding sources are available for local producers to implement carbon farming practices. The company Foodshed Inc. distributes local produce and offers an incentive to participating farmers to implement carbon farming practices. CDFA funds conservation practices which sequester carbon through the Healthy Soils Program. The 2022 Healthy Soils funding cycle funded four local organizations providing technical assistance for conservation practices, and 15 projects in San Diego County totaling nearly half a million dollars. In addition, Zero Foodprint is a private coalition of restaurants who offset the carbon footprint of meals by funding regenerative practices, primarily compost application. Each year for the past five years, UCCE has hosted a Climate Symposium in San Diego to showcase the most current research and projects addressing climate change in agriculture. NRCS provides cost-share incentives for conservation practices through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Regional programs supporting climate resilient practices are UCCE Agricultural Advisors, City of San Diego Climate Action Plan, County of San Diego Regional Decarbonization Framework, and the SDFSA Food Vision 2030.

Local RCDs have formed the Southern California Soil and Water Hub to enhance technical assistance. Services include Carbon Farm Planning to help producers to prioritize which conservation practices to implement; completed plans include sequestration potential of up to 7,400 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year. Since 2017, hub members have maintained CDFA Healthy Soils demonstration sites for practices including cover crops, compost application, mulch application, hedgerow installation, reduced tillage, and prescribed grazing. As part of demonstration projects, technical assistance providers monitor soil organic matter in treatment and control sites. Typical values or conventional soils are <2%, but organic matter can increase by at least 0.5% per year with frequent compost application, as documented since 2018 at several Incubator Farm Plots at the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden. Instead of being a net producer of greenhouse gases, organic waste can be used as an essential tool to reduce the impacts of climate change. Building soil organic matter mitigates the effects of climate change by sequestering carbon in the soil. Meanwhile agricultural soils with high levels of organic matter adapt to the effects of climate change by improving soil health and retaining soil moisture. For sandy soils in arid climates, every 1% increase in organic matter equates to an increase in 2,850 gallons per acre, which can be refilled multiple times by precipitation during the wet season (Libohava et al., 2018).

Producer Profiles

Orchard Entrepreneur – Papaw's Farm – James Harris

James Harris' great-grandfather owned a timber farm, which was not the norm for an African-American man in Louisiana in 1895. James grew up hearing stories of family members born on the farm and how empowering it was to own land and be self-sufficient. In the 1960s, there was a transition of ownership and the family lost an important connection to their heritage. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, James began to think about his legacy and "decided to get land to return land ownership back to our family."

The Harris Family began hearing about the many neighboring farmers in Valley Center who could not afford to water their groves. They found an avocado grove that had been fallowed for six years and decided to invest in reinvigorating the operation. Their plan was to use climate-smart practices, efficient irrigation and diversify with coffee and other subtropical fruits. James named their farm for his grandfather – Papaw – who lived long enough to see James return agricultural land ownership back to the Harris family.

The process of restoration has been vigorous work that requires resilience and creativity. "If you continued to farm the way that you farmed for the last 100 years then there is no way you can sustain avocados or farming in that area, so we had to do things differently." They are working towards organic certification, but for James that is just the beginning of being a sustainable land steward. Some of the key management decisions they have made include moving to high density plantings, utilizing deep root irrigation, using soil moisture sensors, and installing solar panels to power their automated systems. He is pairing the knowledge passed down from his great-grandfather with his own passionate pursuit of new information. He has found that "the people who have been the most educational are farm workers and day laborers" and greatly appreciates these local mentors.

When asked how he is inspiring his own daughters to take interest in agriculture, he noted that his younger daughter helped design their solar system and their older daughter is taking interest in becoming an entrepreneur of value-added products made from farm grown produce. "It doesn't have to be the traditional hand in dirt farming to be involved in agriculture. It doesn't have to be the traditional overall wearing farmer – even though I wear overalls every day."

Ranching Family – John Austel – 4J Horse and Livestock

It all started with summertime in the Sierras. John Austel had moved to California and was grazing cattle in California's mightiest mountain range, honoring his grandfather who first taught him to ranch in the Ozark's of Arkansas. After working a few years for the Farm Credit System, John settled in San Diego and was inspired to follow a career providing technical support to cattlemen and selling Property & Casualty Insurance. But when John's sons started in 4-H Youth Development it all came full circle - they raised ten steers together as a family: John, Jake, Josh, Jesse and Liz - and 4J H & L was born. John knew then that the craft of cattle-ranching would only be preserved by inspiring the youth.

Having previously sold fire insurance for a living and going through two major wildfires, he now became focused on wildfire prevention. Rancho Jamul and Hollenbeck Canyon are grasslands in South San Diego County that had been cultivated and grazed for two centuries. The grasslands were fallowed in the late 1990's with the intention of restoring native vegetation, but with no wild or domesticated grazing animals, instead invasive weeds took over to the detriment of wildlife. 4J H & L applied for a grazing permit from

CDFA and saw immediate effects as a vulnerable burrowing owl population bounced back and began to follow the herd through the fields. When fire swept through neighboring fallow grasslands, the reserve remained unscathed and neighboring homeowners began asking John to graze near their properties as well. There was something to this – managed right, working lands could provide food while also protecting biodiversity.

Prescribed grazing is an approach to rangeland management that rotates cattle through pastures with careful observation and timing. This allows the grasses to provide their maximum year-to-year forage potential, without the problems of over-grazing. This story of success drew major attention, and researchers sought to verify the effects of the approach. John collaborated with RCDGSDC to install fencing for more pastures and monitor soil health. Certified Rangeland Manager Liz Kellogg created a Grazing Management Plan, while the San Diego Management and Monitoring Program hired US Berkeley researchers to study how grazing affected habitat quality and wildfire potential; results will inform efforts to re-introduce grazing on fallowed lands.

The 4J herd operates on a portion of 12,000 acres and John plans to continue grazing in this manner indefinitely, with studies planned to track the progress going forward. He will also carry on investing in the ranching community by supporting youth education, hosting annual gatherings, advocating for the need for regional grazing and wildfire infrastructure, and serving local ranchers as President of the San Diego & Imperial County Cattlemen's Association.

Urban Market Farmers – Pixca – Leonard Vargas and Erik Rodriguez

Pixca is a farming business co-owned and co-operated by farmers of color Leonard Vargas, a 3rd generation Latino farmer, and Erik Rodriguez. Since founding Pixca in 2017, Leonard has been joined by and mentored several Latino beginning farmers as they grow their career in agriculture. The farm is located on a half-acre plot in the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden, which is managed by RCDGSDC and owned by the County of San Diego. Pixca is driven by the desire to support their South Bay neighbors and advance food sovereignty, while using regenerative practices to tend the land. Healthy soil paves the way for a healthy community. It shows in the strong response from youth to learn from the farmers and from the community to support the business.

It is inspiring to see how productive their small farm is throughout the year, and how resilient they are in the face of challenges. In the winter of 2019 and again in 2022, seasonal flooding from the Tijuana River forced them to halt food production for months and in response they began their floral program. While they cultivate practical skills with young farmers, they also cultivate a sense of community with their customers. Chicano traditions are central to their mission and their busiest day of the year is Dia de los Muertos when the farm stand is a sea of marigold Cempasuchil flowers.

Pixca hosts a farm stand on Saturdays at the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden, as a way to bring people to where their food is grown and meet the humans who grew it. In addition, they provide plant starts and resources to encourage others to start growing their own food. Their hard work has not gone unrecognized, and they were named New Farmer of the Year by the Community Alliance for Family Farmers in 2022. New farms are growing in San Diego with the youthful spirit of Pixca.

Sustainable Winemaker – Ramona Ranch Vineyard & Winery – Teri Kerns and Micole Moore

Teri Kerns and Micole Moore, partners in life and business, moved to Ramona in 2004 with no plans to farm. A year later, they had made their first wine and joined the Ramona Valley Vineyard Association.

With sustainability as their top priority, they began to develop their experimental vineyard very intentionally. "We looked at what the climate really supported", and they took notes from what worked in similar Mediterranean climates, like Viognier, Grenache, Tempranillo and Sangiovese varietals. With these guiding principles, Ramona Ranch Vineyard & Winery has become the only certified Sustainable Winery in San Diego. They've installed a wind turbine, solar panels and Tesla battery to support off grid operations during times of peak use.

They are also very invested in supporting diverse habitat around and within their vines while simultaneously improving soil health. After trial and error using crimson clover as a cover crop in the alleys, Teri had a realization. "Wait a minute, we are spending all this energy to take out [these] plants to put in a commercial plant that really isn't suited to the environment, so why don't I learn more about [them] instead?" What started as learning about how naturalized plants support the soil turned into a deeper understanding about how they also support beneficial insects and birds. She planted an insectary that offers year-round blooms and no longer use neonicotinoids on the vines, a common class of pesticides used amongst growers, as they are lethal for pollinators. She and Micole also assist with pest management and welcome select predators by providing water for coyotes so they do not chew on the drip lines, and maintaining raptor perches and owl boxes.

Teri notes that what many wine enthusiasts envision as a picturesque winery, perfectly manicured and clean, in reality may reflect the use of chemicals and practices that are not supportive of the soil and ecosystem. "It's really detrimental to the environment, but it looks good." Through her role as the Programs Director for the Ramona Valley Vineyard association and at her tasting room, she uses her many platforms to educate people about the sustainable practices they implement at their vineyard. The passion shows in their wine, and in 2022 Micole won double gold at the Sunset Magazine International wine competition for an estate Sangiovese wine that he crafted. Teri and Michel invite everyone to discover the not-so-hidden gem that is Ramona, named an official American Viticultural Area in 2006, where she believes "everybody is really invested in doing it right".

Local Leader – Nagata Brothers Farms – Neil Nagata

Neil Nagata is President of Nagata Brothers Farms, which produces berries, fruits and seasonal vegetables in North San Diego County. Three generations have worked on the operation. The Nagata Family first began farming in California more than a century ago and has worked in county since the 1930's. Neil's mother's side, the Yasukochi family, has been farming in the county since 1906. Both families are early contributors to the agricultural industry in San Diego. The operation benefits from Neil's more than 30 years' experience in agriculture, hydroponic production, and expertise in agricultural research.

Contributing to the agricultural community is central to Neil's work. From 2017-2019, he served as President of the Farm Bureau and has served as a board member and chairman in the California Strawberry Commission. In support of farmworkers, Neil founded the California Strawberry Growers Scholarship Fund. The fund has provided more than $2 million in scholarships to the children of farmworkers over the last 26 years. For his leadership and efforts, Neil was named 2021 San Diego County Farmer of the Year by the Farm Bureau.

Each generation of the Nagata Family Farm has adapted to a different set of issues. For Neil, wise land use has been paramount. In 2018, the Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources initiative threatened local agriculture. The public proposition would have encouraged the development of 2.5 acre estates on existing agricultural land, fragmenting commercial farms out of use. Neil collaborated with other agricultural leaders including Mellano and Company to defeat the proposal with a more inspiring vision.

Agricultural lands can and should be an integral part of regional development. Nagata and neighboring farms in the Morro Hills Community are now working with the City of Oceanside to create a flexible land use plan that can evolve with changing market conditions. In this framework, farms can develop portions of their land in a coherent way that adds to the character of local communities and to the growth of local farms. While land owners maintain the right to sell some of the land, neighborhoods are clustered near existing developments. Homeowners benefit from having access to neighboring open space with trails running between rolling hills of extensive fields, and farm businesses can benefit from growing agritourism while shifting their crop mix to meet changing demand. In the wake of a changing economic climate, Neil's leadership is helping San Diego farms to continue to thrive.

Major Policy Impacts

Inventory of Existing Policies

Faculty and graduate students from the School of Public Affairs at San Diego State University (SDSU) inventoried existing agricultural policies by reviewing agricultural policy documents via internet searches between January and September 2022. Based on the results of the outreach effort, the review focused on policies related to water, land access and workforce as key factors that could influence agricultural outcomes in San Diego County. At the local level, cities in the County of San Diego were included in this assessment if they had agricultural land uses within its jurisdiction, including the governments of Carlsbad, City of San Diego, County of San Diego, Encinitas, Escondido, Oceanside, Poway, San Marcos, Santee and Vista. Water districts were also included as local agencies with potentially important influence over agricultural outcomes, with a focus on the City of San Diego Water Department, Fallbrook Public Utility District, Rainbow (MWD), Ramona (MWD), CWA, Valley Center (MWD), Vista Irrigation District and Yuima (MWD).

To assess the how widely each policy has been implemented across jurisdictions, SDSU grouped them into 23 themes. Next, they grouped the themes into four categories identified as policy priorities during the policy task, including Land Use, Water Availability, Workforce Housing, and Climate. Land Use policies included: agricultural conservation policies, agricultural conversion mitigation fee programs, agricultural land trusts, agricultural supportive zoning, agriculture permissible in flood zones, food systems planning policy, tax incentives for urban agriculture, transfer of development rights to land trusts for agriculture landowners, urban agricultural supportive policies, zoning to allow clearing on agricultural lands and zoning to allow renewable energy production on agricultural land. Water Availability policies included: local water quality and conservation, promotion of water efficient landscaping, rate reductions for producers, supply expansion policies and water recycling programs. Workforce Housing policies included: affordable housing for farmworkers, farmworker housing support programs and zoning for Farmworker housing on agricultural land. Lastly, Climate policies included: carbon farming, food waste promotion and reducing the carbon footprint of agriculture.

The appendix contains the full table of policies distributed across the ten local governments with agricultural land uses in the County of San Diego, as well as state and federal policies which affect local jurisdictions, producers and residents. Of the 23 different policy themes listed, 18 of these policies have only been adopted in three or fewer local agencies across the county. Five of these policies have been adopted in four to seven of the ten local agencies with agriculture across San Diego County.

Degree of Policy Adoption

Based on the Policy Inventory, SDSU School of Public Affairs prioritized which policies should and could be implemented most urgently, based on how widely they had been adopted across multiple agencies. Policies were selected from the existing list of local policies, as well as relevant policies from other regions of the state and country.

In terms of Land Use policy, there are strong adoption rates of agricultural conservation policies, but given the turnover rate of agricultural land in San Diego County, these policies may not be strong enough to be effective. Policies need to support off-setting development pressure on agricultural landowners, so they are financially able to retain their lands. Such policies include wider application of agricultural land trusts and easements, as well as wider application of transfer of development rights to land trusts and conservancies. Strong examples of such agricultural preservation programs are already in place with the

County Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) Program and the City of Escondido. This type of program would offer the co-benefit of incentivizing new preservation development in existing urban areas or village centers.

Unfortunately, out of the ten agricultural jurisdictions in San Diego County, agricultural land trust policies were only implemented by the City of Escondido. Furthermore, conservation easement and land trust programs may be more effective when applied at the regional scale rather than by each jurisdiction. Applying these policies at the municipal-level results in fragmentation that weakens the overall effectiveness and outcomes for agricultural conservation. The benefits of strong coordination in multi-jurisdictional regional planning for agricultural conservation has been effectively modelled in the adoption of regional transportation plans, hazard mitigation plans, and multiple species conservation plans. The agricultural community could use these existing plan types as a prototype for a regional agricultural plan.

The inventory of Water Availability policies across the region identified supply expansion policies, rate reductions for producers, water recycling programs, promotion of water efficient landscaping and policies for non-imported water quality and conservation. Each local Water Availability policy was adopted by fewer than half of local municipalities, despite the critical importance of this topic. Consideration should be given to strengthening coordination between water districts and local government policy documents such as general plans by prioritizing essential industry needs for water use as population and infrastructure expenses continue to rise. The CWA incentivizes agricultural water availability through a Permanent Special Agricultural Water Rate, through which most member agencies offer a discount of approximately 25% to agricultural members in their water districts during non-drought conditions (SDCWA, 2023). Even so, the price of water remains among the highest in the country; agricultural producers cannot compete with other regions while paying rates for water set by urban consumers. In addition, the County and Water Authority work with local water districts and RCDs to provide subsidized technical assistance for water efficiency on farms. Furthermore, funding from NRCS through a Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant provides funding for on-farm efficiency upgrades, with a focus on orchards. However, more support is needed to make these programs accessible to the most vulnerable producers across the entire County. Water rates remain a primary factor for farm business viability when compared to other counties across the state and the country.

All of the Workforce Housing policies showed low adoption rates, which is reflected in the overall housing shortage across the region. Multiple agencies specified farmworkers as a vulnerable population in their Housing General Plans. Despite this, lack of affordable workforce housing undermines producers' ability to retain quality agricultural labor. Laborer wages are relatively low and housing across San Diego is in short supply and offered at exorbitant prices. To maintain the viability of the agriculture industry in San Diego County, housing for these laborers must be affordable and in close proximity to their work sites in order to reduce travel costs. More cities should adopt policies and modify zoning to allow construction of workforce housing onsite at agriculturally zoned lands. This not only benefits producers and laborers, but also the region in terms of lowering emissions and congestion generated by farm laborers' vehicle miles travelled. Property tax incentives and permit streamlining could also be employed to encourage construction of affordable housing on agricultural lands.

All Climate policies identified under this category had weak adoption rates across San Diego County, including programs for food waste, farmland carbon reductions, and carbon farming. Only the City of San Diego adopted all three Climate policies. Consideration should be given to stronger application of carbon reduction and carbon farming programs to take advantage of the very high potential for agricultural lands to aide in greenhouse gas reductions.

This inventory of existing policies helped to inform the major policy recommendations, which are described in detail in the 'Proposed Policy Actions' section of the report.

Policy Working Groups

Producers chose to participate in the assessment because they trusted that it would result in meaningful action. Participants painted the vision for a more sustainable, equitable and accessible agricultural community in San Diego. To ensure that the process of reforming policies and building a better system would continue beyond the grant, Policy Partners including SD LAFCO, RCDGSDC, Mission RCD, County of San Diego and SDSU worked to identify key issues to address with working groups. The needs of San Diego's agricultural community are very diverse, with a significant number of urban, beginning or second-career farmers and ranchers working alongside large-scale multigenerational operations. Diverse topography, crop types and farming practices further complicate the range of priorities among producers, with conventional and automated methods, as well as organic and regenerative practices. Recognizing these situational differences, Policy Partners held public meetings to find a common ground, in which stakeholders identified three key areas that affect all producers across the spectrum, regardless of size, experience, or methods. Policy Partners narrowed the many needs to three main categories which (1) required collaboration among regional players to make progress and (2) could be addressed by the Policy Partners during the remaining grant timeframe. The priority needs identified were:

- Water Availability and Efficiency
- Land Access
- Agricultural Workforce Development

To address the focus areas with a regional impact, Policy Partners created a list of actionable projects based on assessment results, listening sessions and direct feedback from producers. To assess public interest on which projects should be pursued, RCDGSDC hosted a series of three Policy Topic meetings at the Farm Bureau in July 2022. The goal of the meetings was to identify a menu of suggested projects for working groups to advance on each of the three policy topics. The full range of the agricultural community was invited: agricultural associations and producers, local and regional agencies and elected officials, supporting organizations, nonprofits, and educators. Each meeting began with a summary of the needs assessments results to frame the discussion on the common needs of the agricultural community and the existing programs available to support them.

Adam Wilson, an SD LAFCO consultant, facilitated the meetings, which benefited from his experience as a political and government consultant with a specialization in project planning and land management from 17 years of public service for San Diego County Supervisor Dianne Jacob. Under Supervisor Jacob, Wilson helped to create the Agricultural Promotion Program in 2017 which streamlined regulations for agricultural supporting industries (County, 2017).

Following the Policy Topic meetings, RCDGSDC proposed three options for tangible, achievable projects for each of the three topics, and presented them to regional stakeholders during the strategic planning meeting in September. Agricultural stakeholders, local agencies and supporting organizations were in attendance and formed the first working groups for each topic. Their first steps were to select a coordinator and identify steps to address the need. Each working group was formed with a balance of agricultural stakeholders, agency decision makers and supporting organizations.

Agricultural stakeholders are an essential element of the working groups as they are directly affected by policy and have the lived experience of regional challenges. Decisions made about a community without a member of that community at the table is unsustainable and sends the message that their input is not valuable. Supporting organizations, defined as nonprofit and community organizations, are crucial as advocates for the agricultural community and provide a perspective of intersectionality across multiple

demographics. Agency decision makers, defined as staff and elected representatives of municipal, regional, state and federal governing bodies, have the ability to affect change at the policy level and ensure that the needs of the agricultural community are being represented in their districts and jurisdictions. Agencies also have access to funding that individuals and non-profits may not.

Water Availability and Efficiency

The issue of Water Availability and Efficiency was the top priority for participating producers. Policy Partners were conscious of the limited ability to affect issues like water costs and availability, as even individual water districts do not control the largest portion of the water rates. The focus for water conservation and efficiency was instead through soil health and land management practices. The primary projects discussed for development were:

1. Create a CropSWAP pilot program, to incentivize the replacement of high-water demand subtropical groves with alternative perennials and/or avocado root stocks with lower water requirements per acre
2. Prepare a cost and demand analysis for recycled water in Escondido, where the city is piloting a recycled water program to supply local farms
3. Develop educational workshops in partnership with irrigation suppliers to implement new technologies

The project chosen by the working group was to design and identify funding sources for a San Diego County CropSWAP program. CropSWAP is a successful water conservation rebate program developed and offered by Rancho California Water District in Riverside County. Agriculture customers receive incentives to replace mature orchard trees, such as avocados, with high-density plantings or with new crops that have lower water requirements. The Rootstalk Swap program consists of replacing existing mature trees with improved root stalk hybrids that require less water and are more salt and disease tolerant. Growers are funded up to $15,000 per acre of crop conversion based on the amount of water saved.

The Water Availability and Efficiency working group was led by Darcy Cook, District Manager of Mission RCD. A diverse set of working group members discussed issues and constraints and gathered information about how to implement a regional CropSWAP program by learning more about eligibility requirements, logistics, administration, financial incentives, water savings per acre foot, and the crops which are most typically implemented with the CropSWAP program management team at Rancho California Water District. In late September 2022, RCDGSDC, in partnership with EGAP and the CA Association of Compost Producers, applied for CA Department of Food and Agriculture's Specialty Crop Block Grant to pilot this program, but were not awarded funding. The working group continues to look for funding sources and has generated interest from local water districts as well as Rancho California Water District, who has submitted a proposal for extending their future funding to include the San Diego region. In addition to program development, there has been discussion led by EGAP around how a comprehensive economic development program would be useful to determine specifically how agriculture contributes to the local economy with jobs, erosion control and carbon sequestration. The working group recommends that water districts collaborate on future regional funding opportunities with the support of product retailers like rootstock producers to incentivize producer participation in a local CropSWAP program and support a healthy agriculture industry.

Land Access

One of the greatest barriers to farmers is land access, specifically for beginning farmers and ranchers. Land conversion to residential and industrial development is also a very real threat to agriculture in the region. To address these complex issues, the Working Group focused on preserving existing open space for agricultural use and making land access more transparent for producers. The primary projects discussed for development were:

1. Using the County PACE program as a model, create a conservation easement pipeline to SALC for agricultural land easements, to permanently preserve specific parcels for agricultural use
2. Create a directory of public and private available land to facilitate matchmaking with farmers
3. Create a new farm plot program with City and/or County owned land to provide small-scale farmers space to farm on conserved land with supportive leases

For the working group project, program partners identified the need for a central database for matchmaking agricultural producers with public and private lands available for lease or sale. This database would support identification of available agricultural land, which is immediately helpful for producers looking to acquire land and also serves as a means to locate lands that could be transferred into conservation easements.

The Land Access working group was led by Stephanie Neal, Land Use and Environmental Planner of the County of San Diego's Sustainability Planning Division within Planning & Development Services. Together, the group developed a Request for Information (RFI) to obtain more information from the various companies that currently manage online databases to connect agricultural land holders and land seekers, such as California FarmLink. Nine companies were contacted for more information and invited to attend the working group to discuss further, however only one response to the RFI was received from California FarmLink. California FarmLink attended a working group meeting in December to answer any additional or clarifying questions from the group. The intent was to use the information gathered through the RFI and the subsequent meeting for the development of a Request for Proposals to solicit bids from these companies for potential partnership as a final product for the working group project. Because only one response was received, the working group is recommending a regional partnership with California FarmLink to host a central database to market both publicly and privately owned agricultural lands for sale or lease. Currently, their Land Portal is how they connect producers to available private parcels and is largely focused in Northern and Central California. In addition, they provide agreement building services, farm business education, and operate a Community Development Financial Institution certified by the Department of Treasury in 2013 with lending relationships with over 325 total borrowers in 37 California counties. Expanding their reach would require funding to sustain a regional position that serves San Diego, as well as potentially partnering with city and county offices to increase accessibility to publicly owned agricultural land.

Workforce Development

An industry is only as strong as its workforce, as seen firsthand how essential farm and food service workers are when COVID-19 ground food systems to a halt. As society continues to rebuild and readjust post-pandemic, labor shortages remain an issue for local producers. Producers also expressed the need for more technically skilled staff, access to equipment that would support more efficient operations and improved regional infrastructure to promote farmworker needs. There is also an agricultural education gap in the region that needs to be addressed. While there are strong 4-H and Future Farmers of America programs in more rural places like Ramona and Valley Center, there used to be more active branches in

suburban and urban communities. There are local higher education programs for people interested in pursuing agriculture as a career, but there is not a robust local pipeline for students to follow, and young people often leave the region to pursue their farming and ranching education.

The primary projects discussed for development were:

1. Creation of a model curriculum for San Diego agricultural education, with focus on short term classes and certifications to fill gaps in regional agricultural needs, and connecting farmers to students for internships and work trade programs
2. Subsidize equipment purchases for regional producers to reduce costs of operation
3. Development of streamlined permitting and subsidized farmworker housing

The Workforce Development working group, led by RCDGSDC, sought to increase the availability of farmworker housing by aligning existing regional programs which subsidize the cost and use of farmworker housing. This work addressed several issues, including the industry-wide labor shortage, regional housing shortage, and high startup cost for beginning farmers. Regional general plans consider farmworkers to be vulnerable populations eligible for affordable housing, but many farmworkers struggle to pay for or even to find housing. Most agricultural land in the County and municipalities is already zoned for at least one farmworker housing unit. However, the cost of construction and complex environmental permitting can make the process prohibitively slow and expensive. This working group gathered existing programs such as the County program for Accessory Dwelling Units, affordable housing incentives, grants programs and apprenticeships which have the potential to reduce the costs of permitting and construction. The project was modelled on the County of Ventura's Farmworker Housing program, which has consolidated and streamlined all processes for approving farmworker housing into a single department. This proof of concept can be used later on to develop a large-scale farmworker community that is fundable by state and federal grants. Co-benefits include ease of entry for beginning farmers, supporting vulnerable populations, and reducing vehicle miles travelled for climate action goals.

Proposed Policy Actions

The message is clear – local agencies need to develop policies to support the growth of the agricultural community in tandem with the growth of the region. Producers resoundingly asked for one deliverable to start the process: representation. Local agencies, districts and regional agencies need to designate qualified staff to provide direct representation to agricultural producers. Liaisons will help producers to navigate regulations among multiple layers of departments and jurisdictions. Liaisons will also support producers to benefit from local, state and federal funding opportunities which may be challenging to apply to, or which they may not even be aware of. To make this effective, government at all scales from districts to cities to County departments should coordinate on business development and climate change adaptation to better support agricultural needs. This agricultural planning program has demonstrated the potential for collaboration, which should now be directed toward policy reform.

Working with stakeholders through outreach efforts, policy meetings and working groups resulted in the ten policy recommendations which span multiple crop types, demographics, and regions of producers across the County. The top ten recommendations include:

1. Assign agricultural liaisons for city and county governments
2. Design lease agreements that invest in working lands
3. Create a regional land use plan to prioritize agriculture
4. Fund growers to transition to low water-use crops and irrigation
5. Equip and incentivize producers to adopt climate-smart practices
6. Streamline construction of farmworker housing
7. Develop advanced water treatment facilities with priority for agricultural use
8. Inform small farming opportunities through analysis of costs and benefits of small farms
9. Expand technical assistance by providing more vocational training
10. Build capacity of farmers and farmworkers with training and services

Each of these recommendations is most effective when led by a key player with relevant expertise and at the relevant scale of government. These recommendations are illustrated below with examples of ideal leaders for reform and implementation of each of the policy recommendations above at the local, regional, and state/federal scales.

Local Municipalities and Districts

First and foremost, local municipalities such as the cities of San Diego, Escondido and Oceanside and water suppliers including the County Water Authority should designate staff to provide direct representation to agricultural producers to navigate regulations and funding opportunities. With sufficient representation in place at all municipalities and water districts, the following three recommendations are possible.

Local municipalities should design lease agreements that invest in working lands, with the first step taken by the City of San Diego on the more than 5,000 acres of farmland in the San Pasqual Valley Agricultural Preserve. Development of beneficial lease agreements and incentives for agriculture on public lands with historic agricultural use can support additional incubator farms throughout the County, and in doing so promote the continued preservation and cultivation of agriculturally viable lands. Leases should balance multiple objectives of business viability, food production, natural resource conservation and community engagement. By designing long-term leases which benefit agricultural production, agencies gain an active partner to meet climate action goals with regenerative practices, protect existing carbon sinks and

manage the land for biological conservation objectives. In place of the Williamson Act, agencies should work with producers to make easement programs like PACE and SALC more accessible and incentivize regenerative practices on conserved lands [see Project Spotlight]. Land development rights can also be transferred to non-profit land trusts or conservancies to incentivize preservation of agricultural land.

As possible, local municipalities and water districts should develop advanced water treatment facilities adjacent to urban areas with priority for agricultural use wherever feasible, following the leadership of the City of Escondido [see Project Spotlight]. Reverse osmosis treated water provides an opportunity to augment supply and to improve water quality by mixing higher quality water with imported water or groundwater with higher concentrations of salts. MWDSC considers agricultural use to be interruptible, but the supply from treated water would be buffered against interruption during drought periods. Water districts with different customer bases have an opportunity to collaborate, as urban water districts will produce more wastewater while rural districts will have eager customers. Following the regional norm, one third of the water that is processed through reverse osmosis should be prioritized for agricultural use, and any savings in treatment and conveyance costs passed on to the agricultural producers. In addition, agencies can promote investment in water efficiency and groundwater recharge, supported with safeguards for local food producers through technical and financial assistance.

Local municipalities should streamline construction of farmworker housing in accordance with general housing plans for vulnerable populations, including cities with few farms but which neighbor agricultural areas. Pre-approved plans are already available at some agencies such as the County of San Diego. However, farmworker verification and centralized administration would allow for more extensive construction, broader enrollment, and access to rent subsidies. Streamlined permitting and incentivized construction of farmworker housing on agricultural lands will provide an example of a housing system that works as a model for the region.

Regional Agencies and Organizations

County-wide agencies such as the County of San Diego, San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and the SD County Water Authority should designate qualified staff to provide direct representation to agricultural producers to navigate regulations and funding opportunities. The County of San Diego has led the way by staffing individuals or teams in various departments; but due to the immense scale of the County, more than one representative is needed to coordinate the many regulations and programs across all departments and serve as a contact for producer inquiries. With sufficient representation in place at all regional agencies, the following three recommendations are possible.

Regional agencies should collaborate to create a regional agricultural land use plan, where the County of San Diego can lead the process and involve SD LAFCO and SANDAG. The County has extensive land use planning efforts underway for working lands, and SANDAG is currently developing its most recent regional plan. These plans should be coordinated and specify agricultural needs to prepare the industry for projected pressures and opportunities, much like the 2018 Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan. Agencies should cooperate with the agricultural community to develop the content of the plan and could use existing plan types for transportation and species conservation as a prototype for a regional agricultural plan. Beyond land use, the plan should also consider supporting industries and organizations through the development of marketing support and food hubs across the region [see Project Spotlight], a persistent need that was identified in 2005 (County, 2009).

Regional agencies should fund growers to transition to low water use crops and irrigation, led by the San Diego County Water Authority in collaboration with member agencies with agricultural customers. Water

prices will continue to rise as the per capita supply decreases and as more municipalities convert to fully treated water. The regional opportunity for chronic drought adaptation is by shifting to more resilient crops. The CropSWAP program, pioneered by neighboring Rancho California Water District, incentivizes replacement of high-water demand subtropical groves with alternative varietals, rootstock, and perennials, such as wine grapes and olives, which have a lower water requirement [see Working Group]. This program benefits the region by allowing producers to continue to produce food and manage the land, while benefitting water agencies by stabilizing the demand for agricultural water. Participation in the program should also incentivize the planting of lower water use crops by providing reduced rates for advanced treatment water.

Regional agencies should gather information about small farming opportunities by analyzing the costs and benefits of small farms, led by SD LAFCO with support from researchers at University of California Cooperative Extension. Agriculture is often minimized to being solely a business, when in reality it provides a myriad of economic, social and environmental co-benefits from a local food supply and recreational space to species conservation and climate mitigation. Even so, most producers wrestle with unstable prices for their crops and are not fully compensated for the societal and ecosystem services they provide. A holistic assessment of direct and indirect economic impact which specifies the co-benefits of the agricultural industry in the region could create a funding base that subsidizes growers for the contributions they make to the community. SD LAFCO has initiated this process in collaboration with the County of San Diego with the award of a new SALC Planning grant, which will analyze the cost of running a small farm for various commodities and inform the diversification of crop production.

State and Federal Agencies

To represent and serve producers, state and federal agencies already have the structures in place to assign liaisons to the local agricultural community. Tragically, leadership at these agencies have divested from the region, reducing the number of agency representatives, technical assistance providers, and grant managers that serve San Diego. As a result, many state and federal lands have gone underutilized or even fallowed altogether. The United States Department of Agriculture should lead the way for related state and federal agencies by increasing the number and skill level of technical service providers who serve producers on the ground in San Diego. With sufficient representation in place at major state and federal agencies, the following three recommendations are possible.

State and federal agencies should expand technical assistance with more vocational training and should equip and incentivize producers to adopt climate-smart practices, led by the California Department of Food and Agriculture. This could be accomplished by investing in additional agricultural and horticultural programs at local community colleges, with support from USDA's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. Because grant applications for incentive programs are often overly complicated, San Diego producers cannot compete for funding to improve their operations without direct assistance. Grant applications for conservation practice implementation should be redesigned with producer input to increase accessibility. Agricultural producers should be included in the design of the applications, online forms should only ask information once, be contained within one form, and reduced in length so that busy small-scale producers can complete the application without assistance.

State and federal agencies should build the capacity of farmers and farmworkers with training and services, led by the California Department of Labor. Established producers are struggling with overtime and minimum wage laws which paralyze industries which use seasonal farmworkers or grazers. Meanwhile, beginning farmers struggle to break into the agricultural industry without sufficient training for the practicalities of running a farm business. Agencies and organizations should dedicate workforce

and career support services to agriculture to expand the labor pool and improve quality of life for farmworkers. Doing so will also open new opportunities for climate mitigation by building the capacity of producers to implement climate-smart practices more effectively.

State and federal agencies should design lease agreements that invest in working lands, led by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Most farmers are of retirement age and over the next ten years an unprecedented amount of land will change hands across the country. Meanwhile, historic farmland and grazing land has been fallowed in an effort to conserve biological resources. State demonstrations have shown that beginning farmers adopt conservation practices at a higher rate, and that working lands can be agriculturally productive while also enhancing habitat for wildlife. State and federal agencies should open fallow or underutilized lands to cultivation with the condition of strategic monitoring of critical environmental metrics. Veteran farmers should be engaged to provide mentorship to the next generation of farmers and land stewards. Land access for beginning farmers is a focus of the 2023 Farm Bill and has potential for nationwide implications.

Project Spotlights

WATER | City of Escondido - Membrane Filtration Reverse Osmosis (MFRO) Facility

There is a large concentration of farmers in the vicinity of the city of Escondido, many of which are subtropical fruit producers. Over the last decade as drought has intensified, many growers have had no choice but to abandon their groves due to high water costs. Escondido had an existing Title 22 recycled water supply through their Hale Avenue Resource Recovery station and sought a way to expand their support for growers, reduce the level of wastewater being discharged into the Pacific Ocean, and limit reliance on imported water.

According to their project design, "the MFRO product water will be blended with recycled water that has not been treated by the MFRO process to produce water with a salt concentration appropriate for agricultural irrigation", as avocados are especially sensitive to salt. This newly blended water will then be made available to agricultural users at a reduced rate, recognizing the vital role of farmers in Escondido's economy and land use.

This historical project was developed between the City of Escondido, environmental engineers from Brown and Caldwell, and J.R. Filanc Construction Company. They broke ground on the facility in March 2021 and expect to be completed in 2023.

WORKFORCE | Foodshed Inc. Farm Hub

Foodshed Inc. is a 100% farmer operated- and owned-organization dedicated to reconnecting people to their food system and appropriately valuing the farmers who tend the land. Founded in 2020 by members of Solidarity Farm in Pauma Valley on Pauma Tribal land, they developed a small farm distribution hub to make locally and sustainably grown food more accessible to communities of concern. Weekly harvests are aggregated from over 20 small-scale producers and made available to purchase at affordable prices, as well as covered by subsidies like CalFresh. Central to their mission is the notion that farmers need to be compensated fairly for their work. 80% of each "food dollar" spent at Foodshed Inc. goes to the farmer, rather than the national average of 15%. Foodshed Inc. also incentivizes their producers to use regenerative farming practices which sequester soil carbon rather than extract from the land, and 5% of all sales go towards regenerative agriculture research and project implementation. They are also supported by grant funding and donations.

This business model, which is centered on producers and serving the community, encourages the growth of new and small farmers because they can rely on a network of resources and a steady market.

LAND | Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (PACE)

Since the mid-1990's, San Diego has been ranked in the top ten counties in California with the largest net loss of irrigated farmland (DOC, 2015). To combat this loss, the County of San Diego adopted the PACE program into their General Plan in 2011, which promotes the commitment of parcels in unincorporated areas for permanent agricultural use. The program includes a monitoring component to ensure proper land use and also counts working lands in easements towards environmental mitigation banks.

This program is an example of organized regional support for the agricultural industry. In 2021, updates to the PACE program allowed more properties to be considered for conservation easements in an effort to support the County's investment in their Climate Action Plan. This expansion shows how the

preservation of viable working lands has not only economic and social value, but will also help to reach the region's conservation goals.

Implementation Plan

Regional Vision

Agriculture is under historic pressure. What was once a dominant profession in San Diego has become threatened by rising land and labor costs, water prices, and climate change impacts. Some of these challenges may seem insurmountable, but we strongly believe that the first step to improve the industry is to reinvigorate the cultural importance of agriculture in our region. The shift towards an economy which thrives on tourism and manufacturing has resulted in the conversion of agricultural land to warehouses, factories, and hotels. Farms are taken for granted, as the majority of the local food supply is grown outside of the County, further diminishing the cultural connection to land management through the food we eat. We need to rebuild the narrative that agriculture is as critical to our economy and our regional identity as are our beaches and sunny skies. Investing in local farmers and ranchers not only makes San Diego more financially resilient, but also brings educational, nutritional, land use, and ecological co-benefits. Together we seek to build a community that is invested in sourcing food locally from producers that tend the land with climate-smart practices for the public good. Agriculture is a tool we can use to achieve our state's goals of reducing carbon emissions, and in the process educate and empower our local youth to proudly embrace the responsibility of land stewardship.

Key Collaborators

The policies highlighted above are critical to strengthening the agricultural industry. To ensure that they are implemented, government agencies and support organizations must demonstrate buy-in by prioritizing agriculture in policy change and fiscal commitments. More active stakeholder involvement from the agricultural community will ensure that there is ample opportunity for regional collaboration to consolidate resources and work towards solutions. Agency liaisons are sorely needed and are recommended as the top priority in order to continue the channels of communication developed during this process. The agricultural industry would benefit greatly with this increased representation both at the local and regional levels, as jurisdictions navigate further to protect and promote agriculture in the region. Carbon farming and irrigation efficiency incentives are well-developed around the State and can be implemented rapidly; these programs and services need to remain elevated for their continued execution within agricultural communities in order to meet regional climate action goals. Agricultural land use planning can begin immediately, but will require several years to complete. However, these long-term commitments will provide agricultural producers the on-going incentive and assurance to adapt and develop the industry. Reform of immigration, labor and environmental regulation are federal and state-level efforts, respectively, and the time to complete these goals is uncertain. But, local government agencies shall provide sustained advocacy through their legislative programs for their state and federal delegations.

Collaboration is critical to achieving these policy reforms. Regional players include agricultural stakeholders as well as government agencies and community organizations. Examples of leaders for policy priorities are given above, but teams of key players will need to collaborate to achieve these goals. This process has shown that lasting progress is made when stakeholders, agencies and supporting organizations are all at the table and have a stake in the outcome. Every local resident and business is a critical contributor because as consumers they have the power to invest in and as neighbors they have the power to advocate for local farms. Some of the key stakeholders in the implementation of these policies will include:

Agricultural Stakeholders

- California Farmlink (Ex: Policy 2, Lease Agreements)
- Escondido Growers for Agricultural Preservation (Ex: Policy 4, CropSWAP Program)
- Foodshed Inc. (Ex: Policy 10, Farmer Training)
- San Diego County Cattlemen's Association and Cattlewomen's Association (Ex: Policy 2, Lease Agreements)
- San Diego County Farm Bureau (Ex: Policy 1, Agricultural Liaisons)
- Vista Community Clinic – Farmworker Care Coalition (Ex: Policy 6, Farmworker Housing)
- Ramona Valley Vineyard Association (Ex: Policy 5, Climate-smart Practices)

Government Agencies

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Ex: Policy 2, Lease Agreements)
- California Department of Labor (Ex: Policy 10, Farmer Training)
- California State Parks (Ex: Policy 2, Lease Agreements)
- Cities of Escondido, Oceanside and San Diego, among others (Ex: Policy 1, Agricultural Liaisons)
- County of San Diego Department of Agriculture Weights and Measures (Ex: Policy 8, Cost Assessment)
- County of San Diego Department of Planning and Development Services (Ex: Policy 5, Climate-smart Practices)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service – Escondido Service Center (Ex: Policy 9, Technical Assistance)
- Resource Conservation Districts including Mission RCD, RCD of Greater San Diego County and Upper San Luis Rey RCD (Ex: Policy 9, Technical Assistance)
- San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission (Ex: Policy 3, Regional Plan)
- San Diego County Water Authority and key member agencies (Ex: Policy 7, Recycled Water)
- San Diego Housing Commission (Ex: Policy 6, Farmworker Housing)
- Tribal nations such as the Pauma Band of Luiseño Indians, Mesa Grande Band of Mission Indians among other Kumeyaay, Luiseño, Cahuilla and Cupeño bands (Ex: Policy 5, Climate-smart Practices)
- United States Bureau of Land Management (Ex: Policy 2, Lease Agreements)
- United States Forest Service (Ex: Policy 2, Lease Agreements)

Supporting Organizations

- 4-H Youth Development (Ex: Policy 10, Farmer Training)
- Community Health Improvement Partners (Ex: Policy 8, Cost Assessment)
- Community Planning and Advisory Groups (Ex: Policy 3, Regional Plan)
- Consumers in urban and rural communities (Ex: Policy 7, Recycled Water)
- Future Farmers of America (Ex: Policy 10, Farmer Training)
- Land Developers in rural communities (Ex: Policy 6, Farmworker Housing)
- San Diego Food System Alliance (Ex: Policy 1, Agricultural Liaisons)
- University of California Cooperative Extension (Ex: Policy 4, CropSWAP Program)

Funding these efforts can take the form of direct government programs, but can also take advantage of state and federal grant programs and consumer payment for services. Potential sources of grant funding include:

- California Department of Conservation
    - Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation
- California Department of Food and Agriculture
    - Healthy Soils Program
    - State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program
    - Specialty Crop Block Grant
- California Department of Housing and Community Development
    - Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities
    - Low-Income Weatherization Program Farmworker Housing
- California Department of Water Resources
    - Integrated Regional Water Management
    - Water Use Efficiency
- US Bureau of Reclamation
    - WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency
- US Department of Agriculture
    - Environmental Quality Incentives
    - Land, Capital and Market Access
    - Off Farm Labor Housing
- Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education
    - Professional and Producer

The next stages of the process have already begun. This planning process made clear the needs of farmers and ranchers to thrive, but also revealed new questions about the degree of support needed and the cost to implement new programs. SD LAFCO will continue the planning process in collaboration with the County of San Diego with renewed funding from DOC. The new grant will analyze the cost of running a small farm for various commodities and inform the diversification of crop production to help stabilize the local agricultural economy.

Closing Statement

We cannot achieve this cultural shift in a vacuum. Farmers and ranchers need to be invited to the table as key partners in regional land use decisions. Local, state, and federal agencies can collaborate and share resources on projects that bolster agricultural support. The community can commit to investing more of their dollars in locally-grown food on carefully stewarded land. Our local schools can incorporate nutritional and environmental education into the classroom and introduce their students to the land and people that grow their food. San Diego can transition to an economy, an educational system and a climate which recognizes local agriculture as a core element of its identity, and fully values the agricultural producers who make it possible.

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Appendices

1. Figures
2. Maps
    a. Historic Extent
    b. Current Extent
    c. Unutilized Lands
3. Graphs
    a. Needs Assessment Results
4. Reports
    a. Mapping Results
        i. Storymap
        ii. Emissions Analysis
    b. Outreach Report
        i. Needs Assessment Consent
        ii. Needs Assessment Form
        iii. Spanish Language Needs Assessment Consent
        iv. Spanish Language Needs Assessment Form
        v. Producer Needs Assessment Results Summary
    c. Policy Priorities
        i. Local Policy Appendix
        ii. Strategic Plan
5. Advocacy Materials
    a. Initiative Project Sheets
    b. Outreach Pamphlet

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5b

AGENDA REPORT
Business | Discussion

September 15, 2023

TO: Special Districts Advisory Committee

FROM: Michaela Peters, Analyst I

SUBJECT: **SALC 2.0 Preview | Greening Agriculture: Market Analysis to Inform and Support Economically Sustainable Small Farming in San Diego County**

SUMMARY

The San Diego Special Districts Advisory Committee ("Committee") will receive a preview of LAFCO's new two-year $500,000 planning grant from the State of California and its Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) program. Work was initiated in July 2023 and involves performing market analysis for existing and emerging crops – with focus on small-farms – while also identifying government opportunities to help bridge economic gaps. Discussion and feedback.

BACKGROUND

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program

SALC was created in 2014 as a component of the California Strategic Growth Council and administered by the Department of Conservation. The SALC program is primarily funded through the California Climate Investments, a statewide program that provides cap-and-trade funds through agricultural conservation acquisition and planning grants for programs intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The principal goals of SALC are stated as:

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Chair Jim Desmond, County of San Diego
Joel Anderson, County of San Diego
Nora Vargas, Alt., County of San Diego
Kristi Becker, City of Solana Beach
Dane White, City of Escondido
John McCann, Alt., City of Chula Vista
Vice Chair Stephen Whitburn, City of San Diego
Marni von Wilpert, Alt., City of San Diego
Jo MacKenzie, Vista Irrigation
Barry Willis, Alpine Fire Protection
David A. Drake, Alt., Rincon del Diablo
Andy Vanderlaan, General Public
Harry Mathis, Alt., General Public

- Protect at-risk agricultural lands from sprawl development to promote growth within existing jurisdictions, ensure open space remains available, and support a healthy agricultural economy.

- Further the purposes of Assembly Bill 32 by avoiding increases in the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the conversion of agricultural land to more greenhouse gas-intensive nonagricultural uses.

Grant Application and Approval | San Diego LAFCO and County of San Diego PDS

In September 2022, San Diego LAFCO and PDS collaborated in submitting a planning grant application under SALC to perform market analysis for existing and emerging crops – with focus on small-farms – while also identifying government opportunities to help bridge economic gaps. The Commission – notably – authorized the grant proposal as lead applicant. LAFCO was subsequently awarded a two-year grant in the full amount of $500,000 with work commencing in June 2023 and through September 2025.

DISCUSSION

This item is for the Committee to receive a presentation on the memorandum of understanding with PDS to guide the implementation of the recently awarded SALC planning grant. The memorandum has been prepared with the assistance of Commission Counsel and in consultation with PDS.

ANALYSIS

LAFCO and PDS recently entered into a memorandum of understanding to guide work on SALC 2.0. A copy of the MOU is attached and prescribes the following key roles and responsibilities.

1. LAFCO's primary responsibility is to act as the grant manager and involves:

    a. Assuming lead role for Task 1 (Grant Management) and involves fiduciary responsibilities including review, approval, and submittal of invoices and other report to the Department of Conservation as well as execution of all professional services contracts for mutually selected consultants.

    b. Assuming lead role – in consultation and close coordination with PDS – on Task 2 (Market Analysis), and Task 3 (GAP Analysis).

    c. Co-lead the drafting, finalizing, and presenting the final report for Task 6 (Greening Agriculture | Final Report) with PDS.

    d. LAFCO also commits to assuming ½ of the required match contribution – or 5% - and equaling $25,000.

2. PDS's primary responsibility is to act as program manager and involves:

    a. Assuming lead role on Task 4 (Outreach and Educational Plan) and Task 5 (Strategic Plan) in consultation with LAFCO.

    b. Co-lead the drafting, finalizing, and presenting the final report for Task 6 (Greening Agriculture | Final Report) with LAFCO.

    c. PDS also commits to assuming ½ of the required match contribution – or 5% - and equaling $25,000.

    d. Selecting a consultant – in consultation with LAFCO – (Agricultural Impact Associates) to proceed with the market and gap analysis set for completion by September 2024.

RECOMMENDATION

Review and discuss, as requested.

ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION

None. Any action by the Committee – including making formal recommendations to the Commission and/or LAFCO staff – can be accommodated through a successful motion.

PROCEDURES

This item has been placed on the Committee's agenda for discussion and possible action as part of the business calendar. The following procedures are recommended in the consideration of this item:

1) Receive verbal presentation from staff unless waived.
2) Invite comments from interested audience members.
3) Discuss item and provide feedback as requested.

Respectfully,

Michaela Peters

Michaela Peters
Analyst I

Attachment:

1) MOU

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MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Administration of the State Department of Conservation's
Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program Grant

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is for the purpose of administration of the State Department of Conservation's Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) Grant Award and is entered into and effective July 1, 2023 between the San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission ("LAFCO") and the County of San Diego Planning and Development Services ("PDS"). The LAFCO and PDS are each referred to herein as a "Party" and are collectively referred to herein as the "Parties".

RECITALS

WHEREAS, the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) program was created in 2014 as a component of the California Strategic Growth Council and administered by the Department of Conservation; and

WHEREAS, the SALC program is primarily funded through the California Climate Investments, a statewide program that provides cap-and-trade funds through agricultural conservation acquisition and planning grants for programs intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, SALC seeks to protect at-risk agricultural lands from sprawl development to promote growth within existing jurisdictions, ensure open space remains available, and support a healthy agricultural economy; and

WHEREAS, SALC furthers the purposes of Assembly Bill 32 by avoiding increases in the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the conversion of agricultural land to more greenhouse gas-intensive nonagricultural uses; and

WHEREAS, LAFCO partnered with the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego ("RCDGSD") to submit a joint-grant proposal under the SALC program with LAFCO serving as the lead applicant to identify, assess, and track agricultural trends in San Diego County; and

WHEREAS, on January 12, 2021, the Department of Conservation formally awarded LAFCO as lead applicant a grant totaling $250,000, less a 10% match contribution, with a June 1, 2021 through May 31, 2023 term (referred to as "SALC 1.0"); and

WHEREAS, SALC 1.0 was awarded to LAFCO in order for LAFCO to proceed with the RCDGSD-LAFCO joint proposal; and

WHEREAS, the Parties collaborated on submitting a joint-grant proposal ("Parties' Proposal") under the SALC program to implement a recommendation in SALC 1.0 to perform market and gap analysis to help inform and sustain small farming (farms 10 acres or less) operations in San Diego County; and

WHEREAS, on December 16, 2022, the Department of Conservation formally awarded LAFCO as lead applicant a grant totaling $500,000.00, less a 10% match contribution, with a June 1, 2023 through September 30, 2025 term (hereafter "SALC 2.0"); and

WHEREAS, SALC 2.0 was awarded to LAFCO in order for LAFCO to proceed with the Parties' Proposal; and

WHEREAS, on May 11, 2023 LAFCO and PDS entered into a Grant Agreement with the Department of Conservation to administer SALC 2.0 ("Grant Agreement"), attached hereto as Attachment A and incorporated herein by reference; and

WHEREAS, the Parties wish to memorialize their respective roles, duties, and related expectations in implementing SALC 2.0;

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the promises, terms, conditions, and covenants contained herein, the LAFCO and PDS hereby agree as follows:

I. Purpose and Objectives

This MOU is entered into by the Parties for the purpose of partnering in SALC 2.0 to perform market analysis for existing and emerging crops – with focus on small-farms – in San Diego County while also identifying government opportunities to help bridge economic gaps. Specific objectives are included in the attached Work Plan.

a. Generate good and timely market information to help smaller farmers – current, prospective, and under-represented – in San Diego County by bridging economic gaps in operations.

b. Generate good and timely gap analysis to help local government – starting with the Parties as well as others – to take policy actions to support small farms in San Diego County.

All funding and related resources are based on the SALC 2.0 award.

II. Agreement

The Parties to this MOU agree that:

The Parties will work in good faith and coordinate all activities, both as individual and independent agencies and as Parties under this MOU, to meet the objectives of this MOU. The Parties shall cooperate with one another and work as efficiently as possible in the pursuit of all activities and decisions described in this MOU.

The LAFCO and PDS shall act as the program managers under this MOU, performing actions and responsibilities in close consultation.

III. Roles and Responsibilities

1. LAFCO shall serve as the grant manager of SALC 2.0.

    a. As grant manager, LAFCO will be responsible for the following duties:

        i. Assume lead role for **Task 1** of the Work Plan and the administration of the grant and execute all professional services contracts for consultants and/or vendors in performance of SALC 2.0. All consultants and vendors shall be selected by LAFCO in consultation with PDS. LAFCO shall act in good faith

to reasonably assure all consultants and vendors are agreeable to PDS with the authority, nonetheless, to proceed as LAFCO deems appropriate.

ii. LAFCO shall review, approve, and submit all of the following documents – on behalf of the Parties and partners – to the Department of Conservation:

- Invoices;

- Regular progress reports; and

- The final report signed by both Parties.

iii. Maintaining an accounting system that accurately reflects all fiscal transactions and provides accounting information, retaining all records, and required documents as specified in Exhibit C of the Grant Agreement;

iv. Assume ½ of the required match contribution – or 5% - and equaling $25,000.

v. Assume lead role for **Task 2** and **Task 3** of the Work Plan. LAFCO shall act in good faith to reasonably assure all market and gap analyses performed under these tasks – including setting scope, scale, and related implementing assumptions – are agreeable to PDS with the authority, nonetheless, to proceed as LAFCO deems appropriate.

vi. Share responsibility for **Task 6** of the Work Plan with PDS with respect to drafting, finalizing, and presenting the final report to the LAFCO Commission and San Diego County Board of Supervisors among other stakeholder groups. This also includes providing a final report to the Department of Conservation in the form provided in Attachment 3 to the Grant Agreement.

vii. Complete work on time, as provided in Attachment 2 of the Grant Agreement, and within budget, as provided in Attachment 4 of the Grant Agreement;

viii. Comply with all terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement, including the General Terms and Conditions provided in Exhibit C and the Special Terms and Conditions provided in Exhibit D;

ix. Comply with all local, state, and federal law.

2. PDS shall serve as program manager of SALC 2.0.

a. As program manager, PDS will be responsible for the following duties:

i. Assume lead role for **Task 4** and **Task 5** of the Work Plan. PDS shall act in good faith to reasonably assure all outreach as well as preparing the educational the strategic plans performed under these tasks – including setting scope, scale, and related implementing assumptions – are agreeable to LAFCO with the authority, nonetheless, to proceed as PDS deems appropriate.

ii. Share responsibility for **Task 6** of the Work Plan with LAFCO with respect to drafting, finalizing, and presenting the final report to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and LAFCO Commission among other stakeholder

groups. This also includes providing a final report to the Department of Conservation in the form provided in Attachment 3 to the Grant Agreement.

iii. Assume ½ of the required match contribution – or 5% - and equaling $25,000.

iv. Drafting progress reports and invoices to support PDS expenses quarterly and in the form provided in Attachment 5 to the Grant Agreement;

v. Using grant funds only for the purposes provided in the Grant Agreement;

vi. Complete work on time, as provided in Attachment 2 of the Grant Agreement, and within budget, as provided in Attachment 4 of the Grant Agreement;

vii. Comply with all terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement, including the General Terms and Conditions provided in Exhibit C and the Special Terms and Conditions provided in Exhibit D;

viii. Comply with all local, state, and federal law.

IV. Term

1. This MOU will retroactively commence on July 1, 2023, and will terminate at the end of the grant funding period on September 30, 2025.

2. LAFCO and PDS may terminate this MOU for any reason on thirty calendar days' written notice to the other party. The parties are required to meet and confer during the thirty-day period before the effective date of the termination.

V. Indemnification

To the fullest extent permitted by law, PDS shall indemnify, hold harmless, and when LAFCO requests with respect to a claim, provide a deposit for the defense of, and defend LAFCO, its officers, agents, employees and volunteers from and against any and all claims, losses, costs and expenses for any (1) damage due to death or injury to any person, whether physical, emotional, consequential or otherwise, (2) injury to any property, or (3) claim alleging mismanagement of funds arising out of or in connection with PDS's alleged negligence, recklessness or willful misconduct or other wrongful acts, errors or omissions of PDS or any of its officers, employees, servants, agents, or subcontractors, or anyone directly or indirectly employed by either PDS or its subcontractors, in the performance of this MOU or Grant or its failure to comply with any of its obligations contained in this MOU or Grant, except such loss or damage which is caused by the sole active negligence or willful misconduct of the LAFCO. Such costs and expenses shall include reasonable attorneys' fees due to counsel of LAFCO's choice, expert fees and all other expenses of litigation. PDS shall not be entitled to any refund of attorneys' fees, defense costs or expenses in the event that it is adjudicated to have not been negligent.

VI. Insurance

1. During the term of this MOU, PDS shall carry, maintain, and keep in full force and effect (1) Comprehensive General Liability Insurance with coverage limits of not less than One Million Dollars ($1,000,000) including products and operations hazard, contractual insurance, broad form property damage, independent consultants, personal injury, underground hazard, and explosion and collapse hazard where applicable and (2) Professional Errors and Omissions Insurance with coverage

limits of not less than One Million Dollars ($1,000,000).

2. Any available insurance proceeds broader than or in excess of the specified minimum Insurance coverage requirements or limits shall be available to LAFCO as an Additional Insured as provided below. Furthermore, the requirements for coverage and limits shall be the greater of (1) the minimum coverage and limits specified in this MOU, or (2) the broader coverage and maximum limits of coverage of any Insurance policy or proceeds available to the named Insured.

3. At all times during the term of this MOU, PDS shall maintain on file with LAFCO's Risk Manager a certificate or certificates of insurance showing that the required coverages are in effect and naming LAFCO and its officers, employees, agents, and volunteers as Additional Insureds. Prior to commencement of work under this MOU, PDS shall file with LAFCO's Risk Manager such certificate(s) and Forms CG 20 10 07 04 and CG 20 37 07 04 or the substantial equivalent showing LAFCO as an Additional Insured.

4. PDS shall require each of its subconsultants to maintain insurance coverage that meets all of the requirements of this MOU provided however, that LAFCO may waive the provision of Errors and Omissions Insurance by subconsultants in its sole discretion.

5. The general liability insurance required by this MOU shall contain an endorsement naming LAFCO and its officers, employees, agents, and volunteers as Additional Insureds. All of the policies required under this MOU shall contain an endorsement providing that the policies cannot be canceled or reduced except on thirty days' prior written notice to LAFCO. PDS agrees to require its insurer to modify the certificates of insurance to delete any exculpatory wording stating that failure of the insurer to mail written notice of cancellation imposes no obligation, and to delete the word "endeavor" with regard to any notice provisions.

VII. Books and Records

Each Party shall have access to and the right to examine any of the other Parties' pertinent books, documents, papers, or other records (including, without limitation, records contained on electronic media) relating to the performance of that Party's obligations pursuant to this MOU, providing that nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to operate as a waiver of any applicable privilege. Each Party shall keep this information confidential to the extent allowed by law.

VIII. Notice

All notices required by this MOU will be deemed to have been given when made in writing and electronically or physically mailed to the respective representatives of the Parties at their respective addresses as follows:

County of San Diego, Planning and Development Services Department
Dahvia Lynch
5510 Overland Ave. Suite 310
San Diego, CA 92123
dahvia.lynch@sdcounty.ca.gov

San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission
Keene Simonds
2550 Fifth Avenue, Suite 725
San Diego, California 92103-6624
Keene.Simonds@sdcounty.ca.gov

Any Party may change the address or facsimile number to which such communications are to be given by providing the other Parties with written notice of such change at least fifteen (15) calendar days prior to the effective date of the change.

All notices will be effective upon receipt and will be deemed received through delivery if personally served or served using facsimile machines, or on the fifth (5th) day following deposit in the mail if sent by first class mail.

IX. General Provisions

1. Severability. If any term or provision of this MOU or the application thereof to any person or circumstance shall, to any extent, be invalid or unenforceable, then such term or provision shall be amended to, and solely to the extent necessary to, cure such invalidity or unenforceability, and in its amended form shall be enforceable. In such event, the remainder of this MOU, or the application of such term or provision to persons or circumstances other than those as to which it is held invalid or unenforceable, shall not be affected thereby, and each term and provision of this MOU shall be valid and be enforced to the fullest extent permitted by law.

2. Non-delegable. PDS shall not delegate, transfer, subcontract or assign its duties or rights hereunder, either in whole or in part, without LAFCO's prior written consent, and any attempt to do so shall be void and of no effect. LAFCO shall not be obligated or liable under this MOU to any party other than PDS.

3. Waiver. The waiver by LAFCO or PDS of any breach of any term, covenant or condition herein contained shall not be deemed to be a waiver of any other term, covenant or condition or of any subsequent breach of the same or any other term, covenant or condition herein contained. No term, covenant or condition of this MOU shall be deemed to have been waived by LAFCO or PDS unless in writing signed by one authorized to bind the party to be charged with the waiver.

4. Entire Agreement. This MOU is the complete agreement between LAFCO and PDS and may be amended only by written agreement signed by each of the parties involved.

5. Recitals. The recitals stated at the beginning of this MOU shall be conclusive proof of the truthfulness thereof and the terms and conditions of the recitals shall be deemed binding terms and conditions of this MOU.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the Parties hereto have executed this MOU regarding the implementation of the SALC grant on date first above written.

"LAFCO"

By_____
Keene Simonds
LAFCO Executive Officer

Date:_____

"PDS"

By:_____
Dahvia Lynch
PDS Director

Date:_____

Approved as to form:

By_____
Holly O. Whatley
LAFCO General Counsel

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AGENDA REPORT
Business | Discussion + Possible Action

September 15, 2023

TO: Special Districts Advisory Committee

FROM: Carolanne Ieromnimon, Analyst II
Michaela Peters, Analyst I

SUBJECT: **Updated Draft Policy Establishment on Out-of-Agency Services**

SUMMARY

The Special Districts Advisory Committee ("Committee") will review an updated draft policy to govern outside service approvals for cities and special districts. The updated draft policy has been prepared as part of LAFCO's adopted workplan and responds to growing attention towards out-of-agency services that are due in part to increased communications as part of the municipal service review program. The updated draft incorporates earlier feedback from the Committee provided at its December 2022 meeting in step with continuing to formalize and expand on existing practices in administering out-of-agency service activities. The item is being presented for additional discussion and feedback with the opportunity for the Committee to forward formal recommendations to the Commission.

DISCUSSION

This item is for the Committee to review an updated draft policy governing the process in receiving, evaluating, and acting on out-of-agency service requests. The updated draft is being presented for feedback – including direction on possible revisions – as part of an ongoing public review and comment period. The updated draft includes further refinement – especially with respect to the listing of local exemptions – based on Committee feedback at its December 2022 meeting. The updated draft has also been expanded to provide a mechanism for the Chair or Vice Chair to redirect a decision by the Executive Officer to the full Commission when acting on requests that address public health and safety threats.

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Chair Jim Desmond, County of San Diego
Joel Anderson, County of San Diego
Nora Vargas, Alt., County of San Diego
Kristi Becker, City of Solana Beach
Dane White, City of Escondido
John McCann, Alt., City of Chula Vista
Vice Chair Stephen Whitburn, City of San Diego
Marni von Wilpert, Alt., City of San Diego
Jo MacKenzie, Vista Irrigation
Barry Willis, Alpine Fire Protection
David A. Drake, Alt., Rincon del Diablo
Andy Vanderlaan, General Public
Harry Mathis, Alt., General Public

Key provisions included in the updated draft follow.

- Make explicit the Commission's policy preference to consider out-of-agency service requests on an exception basis when otherwise merited new or extended municipal services cannot be accommodated through jurisdictional changes.

- Establish local definitions for "new" and "extended" services and in doing so, frame the overall extent of the Commission's regulation of out-of-agency services as follow.

  - New services would involve the actual delivery of municipal functions or classes to previously unserved non-jurisdictional lands and/or the re-commencement of functions or classes after a discontinuous period of six or more months.

  - Extended services mean the intensification of municipal functions or classes to served (actual) non-jurisdictional lands that requires a zoning change.

- Make explicit the Commission determines statutory and local exemptions eligibility and provide an expedited process for cities and special districts to receive confirmation from the Executive Officer at no cost.

- Establish local exemptions to include all of the following activities provided through contracts between two or more public agencies:

  - Abandoned Vehicle Abatement
  - Animal Care and Control
  - Billing, Accounting, and Payroll
  - Building and Code Enforcement
  - Cable and Wireless Communications
  - Economic Development
  - Geographic Information Services (GIS)
  - Grant Writing
  - Information Technology (IT)
  - Landscape maintenance
  - Pooled Equipment Purchasing
  - Pooled Materials Purchasing
  - Pooled Services Purchasing
  - Regional Advocacy

- Distinguish the review and approval authority between the Commission and Executive Officer. The Executive Officer shall consider all emergency requests via public health and safety threats and provide notice to the Commission at the next public meeting. However, either the Chair or Vice Chair would be authorized to redirect any decision by the Executive Officer to the full Commission.

A copy of the updated draft policy is attached. Also attached is an email exchange between LAFCO staff and Chair Thorner providing addition and helpful guidance on how the policy would be implemented relative to real-time examples.

ANALYSIS

The updated draft policy before the Committee serves to remedy an ongoing omission with respect to providing clear and formal direction on how LAFCO chooses to meet its delegated duty to regulate out-of-agency services. Addressing this omission – markedly – has become a higher priority given increased conversations with cities and special districts through the municipal service review process and the Commission's overall interest to sync spheres of influence to reflect and accommodate orderly service areas. The timing of the policy work also syncs with recent out-of-agency service disputes between local agencies coming forward. Towards this end, and as detailed above, the updated draft aims to reflect and amplify existing practices that have generally served the Commission well – including delegating emergency requests to the Executive Officer. Proposed local definitions and exemptions similarly reflect existing and best practices and serves to efficiently scale implementation of Section 56133. Staff is hopeful of getting the Committee's support in advancing the draft update for formal consideration by the Commission at a future meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

Review and discuss as requested.

ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION

None. Any related action by the Committee – including making formal recommendations to the Commission and/or LAFCO staff – can be accommodated through a successful motion.

PROCEDURES

This item has been placed on the Committee's agenda for discussion and possible action as part of the business calendar. The following procedures are recommended in the consideration of this item:

1) Receive verbal presentation from staff unless waived.
2) Invite comments from interested audience members.
3) Discuss item and provide feedback as requested.

Respectfully,



Carolanne Ieromnimon
Analyst II

Attachments:

1) Updated Draft Policy on Out-of-Agency Services
2) Email Exchange with Chair Thorner on Real-Time Examples

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Subject:
OUT-OF-AGENCY SERVICES
(Exclusive of Fire Protection Services)

Purpose:
Serve as a guide to the Commission in receiving, evaluating, and acting on requests by cities and special districts to provide new or extended services other than fire protection outside their jurisdictional boundaries.

Background:
State law requires cities and special districts to request and receive Commission approval before providing new or extended outside services by contracts or agreements with limited exemptions (Government Code Section 56133).[1]

Policy:
It is the policy of the Commission:

1. Goals and Priorities:

    a) The Commission will consider out-of-agency service requests whenever otherwise merited new or extended services cannot be reasonably accommodated through annexations or other jurisdictional changes.

    b) The Commission shall only approve out-of-agency service requests for cities and special districts involving territory within their spheres of influence in anticipation of future jurisdictional changes.

        i. The Commission will exercise independent discretion in potentially prescribing the timing of future jurisdictional changes through its authority to condition out-of-agency service approvals.

    c) The Commission shall only approve out-of-agency service requests for cities and special districts involving territory outside their spheres of influence in response to existing or impending public health and safety threats.

        i. The Commission will exercise its independent discretion in determining when existing or impending public health and safety threats exist based on available documentation and analysis provided by LAFCO staff.

[1] Contracts involving fire protection services are separately addressed under Government Code Section 56134 and are not covered under this policy.

2. Definitions:

a) "Agreement" and/or "contract" shall mean a formal written arrangement contemplated under Section 56133.

b) "Service" shall mean any authorized municipal service functions and/or classes provided by cities and special districts other than fire protection as well as those exempted by the Commission within Section 3 of this policy.

c) "New service" shall mean the actual provision of municipal service functions or classes to previously unserved non-jurisdictional lands.

i. New service shall also mean the re-commencement of actual services after a discontinuous period of six or more months.

d) "Extended service" shall mean the intensification of municipal service functions and/or classes to served (actual) non-jurisdictional lands that require a zoning change by the land use authority.

3. Applicability and Exemptions:

a) The Commission determines eligibility of all statutory exemptions under 56133(e) as well as local exemptions provided under this policy.

b) The Commission shall emphasize the "point of delivery" in assessing the applicability of Section 56133.

i. Cities and special districts may request a no-cost determination from the Commission with respect to whether any proposed out-of-agency services are eligible for exemption under 56133 (e) and/or Section 3 of this policy.

ii. The Commission delegates all inquiries for exemption eligibility under 56133(e) and/or Section 3 of this policy to the Executive Officer.

iii. The Executive Officer is authorized to determine eligibility under 56133(e) and/or Section 3 of this policy. The Executive Officer shall provide written notice of their determination to the city or special district to either accept, deny, or deny pending additional information all exemption inquiries within five business days.

iv. Should the Executive Officer determine an inquiry does not qualify for exemption, the city or special district may appeal directly to the full Commission. The appeal request must be made in writing and signed by the city manager or special district manager.

c) With respect to statutory exemptions under 56133, they include all of the following:

i. "Two or more public agencies where the public service to be provided is an alternative to, or substitute for, public services already being provided by an existing public service provider and where the level of service to be provided is consistent with the level of service contemplated by the existing service provider."

ii. "The transfer of nonpotable or nontreated water."

iii. "The provision of surplus water to agricultural lands and facilities, including, but not limited to, incidental residential structures, for projects that serve conservation purposes or that directly support agricultural industries. However, prior to extending surplus water service to any project that will support or induce development, the city or district shall first request and receive written approval from the commission in the affected county."

iv. "An extended service that a city or district was providing on or before January 1, 2001."

v. "A local publicly owned electric utility, as defined by Section 9604 of the Public Utilities Code, providing electric services that do not involve the acquisition, construction, or installation of electric distribution facilities by the local publicly owned electric utility, outside of the utility's jurisdictional boundary."

vi. "A fire protection contract, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 56134."

d) With respect to local exemptions established by the Commission in administering 56133, they include all of the following:

i. Services provided on an entirely advisory basis where no monetary compensation – directly or indirectly and other than reimbursements – is received by the contracted cities or special districts.

ii. Temporary access to treated water supplies from an outside city or special district due to an interruption – planned or emergency – in normal operations for the receiving agency.

iii. Temporary access to send untreated wastewater to an outside city or special district or an associated joint-powers authority for subsequent treatment and/or disposal due to an interruption – planned or emergency – in normal operations for the sending agency.

iv. Services provided between two or more cities and/or special districts through automatic aid agreements. Examples include, but not limited to, providing first-response police protection responses.

v. Services provided between two or more cities and/or special districts involving any of the following activities that may, or not, provide monetary compensation beyond reimbursements:

- Abandoned Vehicle Abatement
- Animal Care and Control
- Billing, Accounting, and Payroll
- Building and Code Enforcement
- Cable and Wireless Communications
- Economic Development
- Geographic Information Services (GIS)
- Grant Writing
- Information Technology (IT)
- Landscape maintenance
- Pooled Equipment Purchasing
- Pooled Materials Purchasing
- Pooled Services Purchasing
- Regional Advocacy

4. Approval Request Procedures:

a) All approval requests for out-of-agency services shall be made in writing by cities and special districts and filed with the Executive Officer. Requests shall be made in letter form, signed by the city or special district manager, and include the following items:

i. Narrative description of the level and range of services to be provided.

ii. Identification and/or description of the affected territory.

iii. Description on how the services will be provided and funded.

iv. A copy of the proposed service agreement or contract.

v. Application fee.

b) As appliable, documentation substantiating the nature of the existing or impending threat to public health and/or safety shall accompany any requests for out-of-agency service approvals.

5. Evaluation Procedures:

a) Requests for out-of-agency service approvals that are not premised on addressing public health and/or safety threats shall be considered by the Commission consistent with the following local procedures.

i. The Executive Officer shall confirm in writing within 30 days of receipt whether the out-of-agency service request is complete.

ii. Incomplete requests shall be referred back to the cities and special districts no later than 30 days from initial receipt with an enumeration of all outstanding items.

iii. Complete requests shall be presented to the Commission along with Executive Officer recommendations at the next available meeting.

iii. Commission shall approve, approve with conditions, or deny by majority vote of members present.

6. Evaluation Procedures – Public Health or Safety Reasons:

a) Requests for out-of-agency services premised on addressing public health and/or safety threats are delegated to the Executive Officer for consideration consistent with the following local procedures.

i. The Executive Officer shall provide notice to any known alternative service providers before taking any actions on requests.

ii. The Executive Officer shall take written action on completed requests as soon as reasonably practicable to either approve, approve with conditions, or deny and subject to a 48-hour administrative hold. The

Executive Officer shall provide written notice of his or her action to the Chair and Vice Chair.

ii. At any time within the 48-hour administrative hold, the Chair and/or Vice Chair may redirect the Executive Officer's decision on the out-of-agency service request to the Commission.

iii. Should the Chair and/or Vice Chair redirect under (ii), the Commission shall consider the Executive Officer's decision as a recommendation and independently approve, modify, or deny the out-of-agency service request at the next regular or special meeting. Item may also be continued as needed.

iv. Should the Executive Officer's decision not be redirected to the Commission under (ii), notice of the action taken on the out-of-agency service request shall be provided to the Commission for information only at the next regular meeting.

7. Reconsideration

a) If an out-of-agency service request has been approved with conditions or denied, the applicant may request reconsideration to the Commission.

Simonds,Keene

From: Kim Thorner <KThorner@olivenhain.com>
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2023 8:26 AM
To: Simonds,Keene
Subject: [External] RE: Draft Policy LAFCO Review/Approval Process for Out-of-Agency Service Requests

Categories: Red Category

Yes, I think adding it would help folks understand. I added some more information below in green as responses, if that is helpful as well.

From: Simonds,Keene <Keene.Simonds@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 8, 2023 8:20 AM
To: Kim Thorner <KThorner@olivenhain.com>
Subject: RE: Draft Policy LAFCO Review/Approval Process for Out-of-Agency Service Requests

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Hi Kim –

Would it be okay if we include your examples into the agenda report? I think it would really help the discussion 😊. Keene

---

From: Simonds,Keene
Sent: Wednesday, September 6, 2023 7:35 PM
To: Kim Thorner <KThorner@olivenhain.com>; Peters, Michaela A <Michaela.Peters@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Subject: RE: Draft Policy LAFCO Review/Approval Process for Out-of-Agency Service Requests

Hi Kim –

These are really good. It's like a LAFCO pop quiz on 56133. See below with the collective highlight that you are illuminating the unique role of recycled water; perhaps the Committee may want to consider a local policy carve-out to exempt these service activities with some friendly LAFCO-guardrails. I also think your examples highlight the benefit of adding some clarifying language in how LAFCO values the point of delivery in applying 56133.

From: Kim Thorner <KThorner@olivenhain.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 6, 2023 5:42 PM
To: Simonds,Keene <Keene.Simonds@sdcounty.ca.gov>; Peters, Michaela A <Michaela.Peters@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Subject: [External] RE: Draft Policy LAFCO Review/Approval Process for Out-of-Agency Service Requests

Keene - These are the ones I could think of off the top of my head that could be subject to this out of agency service request process. Take a look and let me know what you think or if you need more detail on these. Kim

1. OMWD Agreement with Vallecitos Water District (VWD) for water treatment services whereby OMWD treats raw water for VWD at a cost beneficial to both agencies.

There is no service being provided relative to 56133. 56133 applies when one agency provides a service by contract beyond its boundary. In this example, neither party is providing a service beyond their boundaries. VID is only purchasing a supply (potable water) from OMWD. The supply morphs into a "service" only at the point of delivery to the end user – which are the ratepayers within VID.

2. OMWD Agreement with Vallecitos Water District whereby OMWD buys recycled water from VWD.
   There is no service being provided relative to 56133. In this example, neither party is providing a service beyond their boundaries. OMWD is only purchasing a supply (recycled water) from VID. The supply morphs into a "service" only at the point of delivery to the end user – which are the ratepayers within OMWD.

3. OMWD Agreement with City of San Diego whereby OMWD buys recycled water from City of San Diego
   There is no service being provided relative to 56133. In this example, neither party is providing a service beyond their boundaries. OMWD is only purchasing a supply (recycled water) from San Diego. The supply morphs into a "service" only at the point of delivery to the end user – which are the ratepayers within OMWD.

4. OMWD Agreement with City of San Diego to provide recycled water to Fairbanks Ranch Golf Course, in the City of SD
   This is a service subject to 56133. In this example, as I understand it, OMWD is providing a service (recycled water) to end users beyond their jurisdictional boundary. The next question is whether any of the statutory exemptions appropriately apply under subsection (e). If not – and unless LAFCO were to create a local exemption in policy – than OMWD would need to apply for approval at LAFCO.

5. OMWD Agreement with City of San Diego to provide recycled water to Surf Cup Soccer field, in the City of SD
   This is a service subject to 56133. In this example, as I understand it, OMWD is providing a service (recycled water) to end users beyond their jurisdictional boundary. The next question is whether any of the statutory exemptions appropriately apply under subsection (e). If not – and unless LAFCO were to create a local exemption in policy – than OMWD would need to apply for approval at LAFCO.

6. OMWD Agreement with San Dieguito Water District to provide recycled water to three properties in the OMWD service area.
   This is a service subject to 56133. In this example, as I understand it, San Dieguito WD is providing a service (recycled water) to end users beyond their jurisdictional boundary. The next question is whether any of the statutory exemptions appropriately apply under subsection (e). If not – and unless LAFCO were to create a local exemption in policy – than SDWD would need to apply for approval at LAFCO.

7. OMWD Agreement with San Elijio JPA whereby OWMD buys recycled water from VWD.
   There is no service being provided relative to 56133. In this example, none of the parties are providing a service beyond their boundaries. OMWD is only purchasing a supply (recycled water) from VWD via its parental guardian - San Elijo JPA. The supply morphs into a "service" only at the point of delivery to the end user – which are the ratepayers within OMWD.

8. OMWD Agreement with RSF CSD to buy recycled water from their Santa Fe Valley plant
   There is no service being provided relative to 56133. In this example, neither party is providing a service beyond their boundaries. OMWD is only purchasing a supply (recycled water) from Rancho Santa Fe CSD. The supply morphs into a "service" only at the point of delivery to the end user – which are the ratepayers within OMWD.

9. OMWD joint use of facilities with SFID for AMI towers
   I am not familiar with AMI towers so not sure. The answer would tie to determining the point of delivery. AMI towers are somewhat like cell towers, but they are dedicated to picking up reads from meters throughout portions of the District. OMWD has many of them, as does SFID. Some are located on property owned outside of each agencies service area (on property owned by the other agency) as they are ideal locations, generally at the top of hills. The towers pick up the reads from the meters and send them back to the respective districts.

10. OMWD Contract with Leucadia WW to share vactor truck use in exchange for valve turning truck use, with employees included for the use of the equipment
    I believe this type of service is subject to 56133, though the Commission and/or other EOs may reasonably see this differently. My take is premised on the assumption that either OMWD or Leucadia employees would find themselves operating a vactor truck with the "service" (wastewater (collection-class) via sludge removal) point of delivery outside their home agency boundary. The draft policy before the Committee does include a local carve-out to exempt this type of shared equipment.

11. OMWD Contract with San Elijo JPA whereby SEJPA utilizes OMWD safety related resources and OMWD has access to their Grade IV WW Operator
    Interesting. What exactly is the safety related resource? The latter component with San Elijo JPA personnel providing a service (wastewater (treatment class)) where the point-of-delivery occurs outside their member agencies' boundaries seemingly triggers 56133. However, and consistent with the intent of creating a local exemption for otherwise nominal shared service arrangements, I would think adding to the list "equipment operators" would be appropriate. This agremenent provides SEJPA staff the opportunity to attend OMWD's scheduled safety trainings and allowing SEJPA to make certified wastewater operators available to OMWD based upon need and availability.

12. Contracts with local fire departments whereby OMWD pays them to inspect hydrants and paint them
    Interesting. If the service (fire protection (prevention class) point-of-delivery is happening outside these fire agencies' boundaries then 56133 does apply. However, it is also seems these arrangements could qualify for an exemption under (e) since it is reasonable to assume would otherwise and readily do this service. Happening within the fire agency's boundary.

13. Occasional shared Grade 5 treatment plant operator with Oceanside, Poway, during their times of transition as a Grade 5 cert is required.
    Interesting. The frequency and lack therein might moot the need for 56133 compliance. More information is needed. Very infrequent. Once in the last ten years at each agency when they were down a Grade 5.

14. Interconnects to distribute and sell potable water between OMWD, San Dieguito Water District, Vallecitos Water District, and Santa Fe Irrigation District for water quality and/or during shutdowns.
    I would assume these service activities trigger 56133 compliance but also readily meet (e) exemption since the contract service (potable water) is an alternative to service regularly being provided by the receiving agency and/or established before January 1, 2001. Established before January 2001.

15. OMWD agreements with Santa Fe Irrigation District whereby OMWD serves water to properties in SFID's service area (or vice versa) due to the presence of an OMWD water main being closer than an SFID water main to those properties
    Yes, this most definitely would trigger 56133 compliance but – and just like No. 14 – would presumably qualify for one of two exemptions under subsection (e). This involves either serving as a contract alternative to OMWD providing an outside service (potable water) that could be otherwise provided by SFID and/or was established before January 1, 2001 and treated as a grandfathered use. It gets complicated – however – if the service gets "extended."

16. OMWD agreements with eight other North County water and wastewater agencies by which to jointly develop regional recycled water plans and to accept state and federal grant funds for the development of that infrastructure, which many times goes across interagency boundaries.
    Interesting. It depends on what the "service" is. It seems a good cover would be to add "grant activities" to the local carve out that may lead to services with points of deliveries outside all of the participating agencies' boundaries. I would like to see grant activities added as we frequently join together to get grants to be competitive with the bigger agencies!

17. OMWD agreement with SDWD/SFID/Escondido for joint maintenance of regional cathodic protection of pipelines network.
    Interesting. Where is the point-of-delivery? In each agency's service area and/or easements crossing through another agency's jurisdiction where we have facilities near each other. The cathodic can protect multiple facilities in corrosive soils. The cathodic protection helps both agencies.

18. Current Principals of Understanding and potential future agreement with SEJPA re: conveyance of brine to San Elijo WRF should OMWD construct its conceptual San Dieguito Valley Brackish Groundwater Desalination Facility.
    Interesting. This reminds me of cities trucking wastewater to an off-site treatment facility, which is a touchy topic in the Bay Area. It seems like the point of delivery remains in OMWD since the supply (potable water) remains in place while the salt is removed. Let me think more about this… 😊

From: Simonds,Keene <Keene.Simonds@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 1, 2023 12:49 PM
To: Kim Thorner <KThorner@olivenhain.com>; Peters, Michaela A <Michaela.Peters@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Subject: Re: Draft Policy LAFCO Review/Approval Process for Out-of-Agency Service Requests

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Awesome

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From: Kim Thorner <KThorner@olivenhain.com>
Sent: Friday, September 1, 2023 12:07:40 PM
To: Simonds,Keene <Keene.Simonds@sdcounty.ca.gov>; Peters, Michaela A <Michaela.Peters@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Subject: [External] RE: Draft Policy LAFCO Review/Approval Process for Out-of-Agency Service Requests

Perfect. I will get the list over to you on Tuesday. Have a great holiday weekend.

From: Simonds,Keene <Keene.Simonds@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 1, 2023 11:59 AM
To: Kim Thorner <KThorner@olivenhain.com>; Peters, Michaela A <Michaela.Peters@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Subject: RE: Draft Policy LAFCO Review/Approval Process for Out-of-Agency Service Requests

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That would be wonderful Kim. Send a few examples our way and we can respond with how the current policy proposal would provide 😊

Keene Simonds
Executive Officer

San Diego County

Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)
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From: Kim Thorner <KThorner@olivenhain.com>
Sent: Friday, September 1, 2023 11:26 AM
To: Peters, Michaela A <Michaela.Peters@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Cc: Simonds,Keene <Keene.Simonds@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Subject: [External] RE: Draft Policy LAFCO Review/Approval Process for Out-of-Agency Service Requests

Hi guys – Happy Friday. I was wondering if we could do a real world test run on the proposed policy with OMWD as an example? I could generate a list of all the agreements that I have with other agencies for treatment services, painting hydrants, equipment and personnel sharing, interconnections, etc. and you could respond whether they would be exempt, require review/fee, etc. Also, are existing agreements grandfathered or would they all have to be reviewed? It might be helpful to have this real world example for the SDAC committee to understand how the policy as written would work and I don't mind having OMWD as the example. What do you think? Kim

---

From: Peters, Michaela A <Michaela.Peters@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Sent: Thursday, August 31, 2023 3:46 PM
To: Peters, Michaela A <Michaela.Peters@sdcounty.ca.gov>
Cc: chrisp@csda.net; Chris Brown <chris@alchemycg.com>; kperaino@vcmwd.org; Celina McDowell <cmcdowell@sfidwater.org>; mavis@ncfire.org; Tita Ramos-Krogman <Tita.Ramos-Krogman@otaywater.gov>; Lsoto@vidwater.org; jessica.mackey@helixwater.org; lynda.ruiz@palomarhealth.org; boardsecretary@sweetwater.org
Subject: Draft Policy LAFCO Review/Approval Process for Out-of-Agency Service Requests

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Hello SDAC Members (bcc),

On behalf of the vacationing Carol Ieromnimon, attached to this email is a draft policy on the LAFCO review/approval process involving out-of-agency service requests. This item will be part of the next SDAC meeting agenda set for Friday, September 15th.

More agenda items for the Sept 15th meeting will be sent separately.

Should you have any questions about the out-of-agency service request policy, please contact me in Carol's absence by phone or email.

Thank you,

Michaela Peters
Local Government Analyst
San Diego County
Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)

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