



# Solano County

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## Legislation Text

File #: 18-339, Version: 1

Consider adopting a resolution supporting the Solano Land Trust application to the California Department of Conservation for a Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation program grant of \$1.8 million that will facilitate the establishment of an agricultural conservation easement on 2,204 acres in Pleasants Valley

Published Notice Required? Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing Required? Yes ☐ No ☒

### **DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION:**

Supervisor Vasquez and the Department of Resource Management recommend that the Board consider adopting a resolution supporting an application from the Solano Land Trust to the California Department of Conservation for a Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation program grant of \$1.8 million that will facilitate the establishment of an agricultural conservation easement on 2,204 acres in Pleasants Valley.

### **SUMMARY:**

Solano Land Trust (SLT) is applying for a Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) program grant from the California Department of Conservation to allow for an agricultural conservation easement to be placed on 2,204 acres (Brazelton Ranch) within the Pleasants Valley agricultural region of the county. The grant request is for \$1.8 million which, if approved, will combine with federal and SLT funding to total \$2.4 million to cover the full acquisition costs for the easement. The easement would be placed on the property in perpetuity.

The proposed easement will allow for irrigated cropland on the valley floor portion of the property and grazing/rangeland activities in the hillside areas. This generally reflects current agricultural practices in the Pleasant Valley area and is consistent with the federal funding requirements of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

A requirement of the SALC grant process is a signed resolution from the Board of Supervisors in support of the project. A link to the SALC grant application and guidelines is below.

[SALC grant application and guidelines <http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/SALCP/Documents/FINAL%20FY17-18%20SALCP%20Guidelines.pdf>](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/SALCP/Documents/FINAL%20FY17-18%20SALCP%20Guidelines.pdf)

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The costs associated with preparing this agenda item are covered in the District 4 and Resource Management Department's FY2017/18 adopted budgets. Submittal of the grant application by the SLT has no financial impact to the County short or long term.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The properties in question are currently held by several members of the Brazelton family, a multi-generational farming family in the Pleasants Valley region west of Vacaville. This project would combine 18 parcels owned by several members of the Brazelton family into one large parcel protected by an agricultural easement

allowing for the permanent conservation of this agricultural land. The properties are an important part of the Pleasant Valley agricultural region.

The Pleasants/Vaca/Lagoon Valley area is one of ten unique agricultural regions identified in the County's General Plan. For this area, the General Plan calls for, "An increased use of conservation easements and increased marketing of local produce that are important to this region". The General Plan further directs that the focus of preservation efforts, including use of Williamson Act contracts and conservation easements, be in areas where agriculture is the predominant land use. (AG.I-10). This action is consistent with language under the General Plan land use designations which encourages private landowners to voluntarily participate in agricultural conservation easements (LU-25). This property is also covered under a Williamson Act contract (#565).

Work on this project dates back to 2003 when Wallace Brazelton and Supervisor Vasquez explored ways to find a path toward the conservation of the Brazelton family's land for generations to come. In subsequent years, the Solano Land Trust has been working with the Brazelton Family, state and federal agencies and County staff to find a way to conserve this land for agricultural purposes. The 18 parcels which will be consolidated into one large conservation easement of 2,204.41 acres are as follows: APN 121-150-14, APN 121-150-15, APN 121-150-16, APN 121-150-07, APN 121-150-18, APN 121-150-10, APN 121-110-02, APN 123-090-05, APN 121-140-15, APN 121-160-10, APN 121-180-01, APN 122-010-03, APN 122-020-01, APN 121-150-110, APN 121-150-130, APN 121-170-110, APN 121-170-020, APN 121-170-120. A map and narrative about the Brazelton property and family are attached to this report.

The Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) is a component of the Strategic Growth Council's Affordable Housing and Sustainability Program (AHSC). The SALC Program complements investments made in urban areas with the purchase of agricultural conservation easements, development of agricultural land strategy plans, and other mechanisms that result in GHG reductions and a more resilient agricultural sector. The program invests in agricultural land conservation with revenue from the California Climate Investment Fund. A link to more information on the fund is below.

**California Climate Investments (CCI) Fund?**

**<http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/capandtrade/auctionproceeds/auctionproceeds.htm>**.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

The Board could choose not to support the submittal of the grant application to the State. This alternative is not recommended as policies in the County's General Plan support the ongoing preservation of its agricultural lands and industry and the establishment of the agricultural conservation easement further these policies long term. Furthermore, the SLT has long been an active partner with the County in the preservation and enhancement of local agriculture.

**OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:**

Solano Land Trust and County Counsel.

**CAO RECOMMENDATION:**

**APPROVE DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION**