

DEPARTMENT: Administration

BY: Rick Benson
PHONE: 966-3222

RECOMMENDED ACTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

Adopt a Resolution and authorize the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors to sign a letter opposing the Governor's 2007-08 State Budget proposal to permanently eliminate the Open Space Subvention Program. The Open Space Subvention Program, commonly known as the Williamson Act, was enacted in 1965. This voluntary program is administered by local governments and involves a 20-year annually renewing contract with individual landowners that restrict the land to agricultural or open space use. Landowners who enroll their land in contracts receive preferential taxation based on the actual use value of the land for agricultural purposes. The State provides subvention payments to participating counties as partial compensation for foregone revenues resulting from reduced property taxes paid on contracted land. Currently Mariposa receives approximately \$200,000 in Williamson Act subvention payments, which helps to fund the General Fund.

If the Governor is successful with his proposal, Mariposa County will lose the \$200,000 it currently receives in subvention payments. The Board will ultimately have to decide whether or not to renew the Williamson Act contracts, which will have a direct impact on the property taxes being paid the affected landowners, but most importantly will have long range effects on future land development issues. Currently approximately 20-percent of Mariposa County is in Williamson Act contracts.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:

The Board has adopted resolutions in the past that support its stand on critical issues.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

Do not adopt the Resolution or authorize the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors to sign the letter. Individual Board members may write their own letters opposing this action.

Financial Impact? () Yes (X) No	Current FY Cost: \$	Annual Recurring Cost: \$
Budgeted In Current FY? () Yes () No () Partially Funded		
Amount in Budget: \$		List Attachments, number pages consecutively
Additional Funding Needed: \$		Draft Resolution
Source:		Draft Letter
Internal Transfer		
Unanticipated Revenue	_____ 4/5's vote	
Transfer Between Funds	_____ 4/5's vote	
Contingency	_____ 4/5's vote	
() General () Other		

CLERK'S USE ONLY:

Res. No.: 07-248 Ord. No. _____
 Vote - Ayes: 5 Noes: _____
 Absent: _____
 Approved _____
 Minute Order Attached () No Action Necessary

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER:

Requested Action Recommended
 No Opinion
 Comments: _____

The foregoing instrument is a correct copy of the original on file in this office.

Date: _____
 Attest: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board
 County of Mariposa, State of California

By: _____
 Deputy

CAO: [Signature]

MARIPOSA COUNTY RESOLUTION NO. 07-248

**OPPOSING THE GOVERNOR'S 2007-2008 STATE BUDGET PROPOSAL
TO PERMANENTLY ELIMINATE THE OPEN SPACE SUBVENTION PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, known as the Williamson Act, is a voluntary program which provides lower property taxes to agricultural landowners in exchange for their contractual commitments with participating cities or counties to keep their land in agricultural or open space use for at least 10-years; and

WHEREAS, the Williamson Act currently protects over 16.3 million acres of agricultural land, much of it having scenic open space and wildlife value, and over half of the States' prime farmland in 52 counties is protected by the Act; and

WHEREAS, in 1998, the Act was amended to establish the Farmland Security Zones, commonly referred to as the Super Williamson Act, which allows landowners to receive an additional tax reduction if they keep the property in the conservation program for at least 20-years; and

WHEREAS, the 1971 Open Space Subvention Act provides a formula for allocating payments to local governments based on acreage enrolled in the program, to help replace the foregone property tax revenue to participating local governments; and

WHEREAS, this financial support from the State has provided a tangible incentive for local governments to stay in the program and initiate more contracts; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, the Legislature and then-Governor Wilson augmented the open space subventions as a means to help rural counties deal with the creation of the Education Revenue Augmentation Fund; and


WHEREAS, eliminating the open space subvention payments will remove the incentive for local governments to participate in the program, potentially leading to the non-renewal of Williamson Act contracts due to the lack of financial resources to support property tax incentives for landowners; and

WHEREAS, without the financial incentive for farmers and ranchers to participate in this important land conservation program, other more lucrative land uses may replace agriculture, threatening the overall viability of California's agricultural economy; and

WHEREAS, the integrity of the Williamson Act as a planning tool used to support general plan and zoning objectives, prevent leapfrog development, and to promote orderly growth will be threatened; and family farms will be lost forever and California will no longer be a leader in marketing "California Grown."

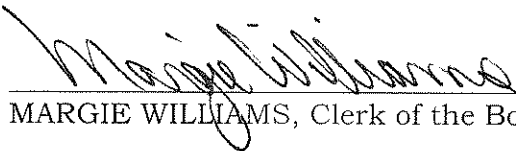
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors opposes the proposed elimination of the Open Space Act Subventions Program and urges the Governor and members of the State Legislature to restore subvention funding to the 2007-2008 State Budget, thus preventing the potential decimation of California's premier farmland/ranchland protection program.

PASSED AND ADOPTED unanimously by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors, a political subdivision of the State of California, this 5th day of June 2007.



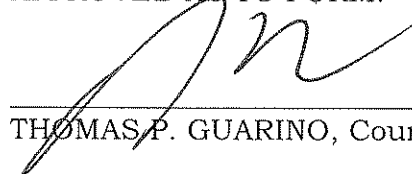
JANET BIBBY, Chairman

ATTEST:

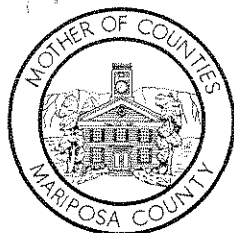


MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



THOMAS P. GUARINO, County Counsel



COUNTY of MARIPOSA

P.O. Box 784, Mariposa, CA 95338 (209) 966-3222

JANET BIBBY, CHAIR
LYLE TURPIN, VICE CHAIR
BRAD ABORN
DIANNE A. FRITZ
BOB PICKARD


DISTRICT III
DISTRICT II
DISTRICT I
DISTRICT IV
DISTRICT V



MARIPOSA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MINUTE ORDER

TO: RICHARD J. BENSON, CAO

FROM: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board 

SUBJECT: Adopt a Resolution and Authorize the Board of Supervisors Chair to Sign a Letter Opposing the Governor's 2007-2008 State Budget Proposal to Permanently Eliminate the Open Space Subvention Program

RESOLUTION 07-248

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MARIPOSA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

ADOPTED THIS Order on June 5, 2007

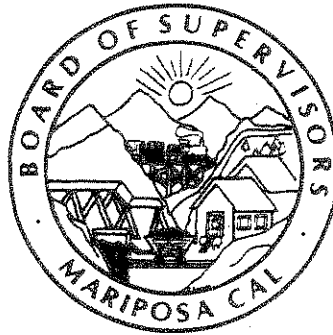
ACTION AND VOTE:

Adopt a Resolution and Authorize the Board of Supervisors Chair to Sign a Letter Opposing the Governor's 2007-2008 State Budget Proposal to Permanently Eliminate the Open Space Subvention Program (County Administrative Officer)

BOARD ACTION: Discussion was held with Rick Benson relative to the draft letter and resolution and changes that were suggested. There was no public input. (M)Pickard, (S)Aborn, Res. 07-248 was adopted approving the letter and formal resolution as revised/Ayes: Unanimous.

Cc: File

Mariposa County Board of Supervisors



District 1 BRAD ABORN
District 2 LYLE TURPIN
District 3 JANET BIBBY
District 4 DIANNE FRITZ
District 5 BOB PICKARD

June 5, 2007

RICHARD J. BENSON
County Administrative Officer

MARGIE WILLIAMS
Clerk of the Board

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

RE: Restoring Williamson Act Subventions to the State Budget

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

The enclosed resolution was adopted by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors and opposes your proposal to permanently eliminate the Open Space Subvention Program from the 2007-2008 State Budget. This proposal will slash \$39 million from the general funds of counties that participate in this program to preserve California farmland and rangeland from development. This action would virtually halt the nation's most effective farmland/rangeland preservation program just as the Central Valley and surrounding foothill counties face unprecedented pressure for urban growth.

Counties cannot afford to lose property taxes that they desperately need for fixing roads, putting deputies on patrol, fighting fires, investigating and prosecuting crimes, guarding public health, maintaining parks, and countless other local services that have already suffered cuts under the Education Revenue Augmentation Fund (ERAF) shift. Without subventions, fewer local governments will offer reduced property taxes to farmers and ranchers, and California's agriculture will suffer another damaging blow.

Mariposa County will lose \$200,000 in discretionary funds under this proposal and in a small rural county with limited discretionary funding resources this will have far reaching impacts. The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors therefore asks you to restore full funding in the 2007-2008 State Budget for Williamson Act Subventions.

Sincerely,

JANET BIBBY
Chairman

JB/mbh
Enclosure

CC: Senator Dave Cogdill
Assembly Member Tom Berryhill
Regional Council of Rural Counties
California State Association of Counties
Mariposa County Farm Bureau
Advocation