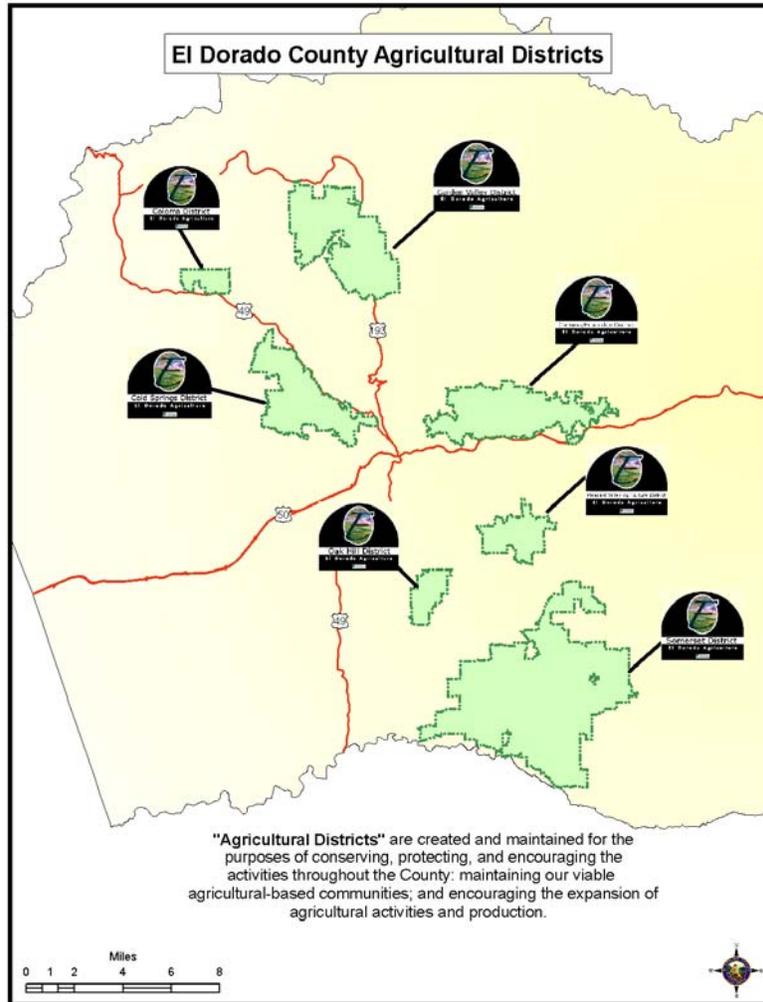


## AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS IN EL DORADO COUNTY

In the 1990's, El Dorado County identified seven areas that are important to agriculture and its future in the county. The areas are:

- » Camino/Fruitridge
- » Garden Valley
- » Oak Hill
- » Gold Hill
- » Coloma
- » Fairplay
- » Pleasant Valley



The Agricultural Districts are identified primarily by soils considered 'choice', which should be preserved for agricultural use. Their purpose is "to conserve and protect important agricultural crop lands and associated activities, maintain viable agricultural-based communities, and encourage the expansion of agricultural activities and production."

This is a winning situation for the consumer, home and business owner as well as the farmer. Our Agricultural Districts not only protect the lands for future generations, they help us maintain our rural lifestyle that is so important to our county.

The 2004 General Plan includes the following Agricultural District policies:

## **LAND USE ELEMENT**

### ***PRINCIPLES***

*The General Plan establishes a land use development pattern that makes the most efficient and feasible use of existing infrastructure and public services.*

*The General Plan provides guidelines for new and existing development that promotes a sense of community.*

*The General Plan defines those characteristics which make the County "rural" and provides strategies for preserving these characteristics.*

*The General Plan provides opportunities for positive economic growth such as increased employment opportunities, greater capture of tourism, increased retail sales, and high technology industries.*

*The General Plan provides guidelines for new development that maintains or enhances the quality of the County.*

### **OBJECTIVE 2.2.2: OVERLAY LAND USE DESIGNATIONS**

**Establishment of overlay designations to provide additional direction for the development of land where circumstances apply generally to the lands regardless of the underlying land use designations.**

Policy 2.2.2.1 The following General Plan overlay designations are included:

- A. Agricultural Districts
- B. Platted Lands
- C. Ecological Preserve
- D. Mineral Resource
- E. Important Biological Corridor

Policy 2.2.2.2 The purpose of the Agricultural District (-A) overlay designation is to identify the general areas which contain the majority of the County's federally designated prime, State designated unique or important, or County designated locally important soils (collectively referred to as "choice" agricultural soils) and which the Board of Supervisors has determined should be preserved primarily for agricultural uses. This designation does not imply any restrictions on agricultural uses in areas not designated specifically as an Agricultural District but only serves to identify agriculture as the principal activity and to discourage incompatible uses such as higher density residential use.

- A. Agricultural Districts shall be used to conserve and protect important agricultural crop lands and associated activities, maintain viable agricultural-based communities, and encourage the expansion of agricultural activities and production.

- B. The minimum residential parcel size for lands containing choice agricultural soils within an Agricultural (-A) District shall be twenty (20) acres or the minimum lot size established by the underlying land use designation, whichever is greater.

Residential parcels within Agricultural Districts where 70 percent or more of the parcel area is identified by the Agricultural Commission as land unsuitable for agriculture, as defined in “The Procedure for Evaluating the Suitability of Land for Agriculture,” may be considered for a minimum parcel size of ten (10) acres. Clustering of planned residential developments on “non-choice” agricultural soils within Agricultural Districts, that have been identified by the Agricultural Commission as land unsuitable for agriculture, may be allowed but in no case smaller than five (5) acres.

- C. Ranch marketing is encouraged on lands engaged in agricultural production.

## **AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY ELEMENT**

### ***PRINCIPLE***

*The Plan must provide for the conservation and protection of El Dorado County’s important natural resources, and recognize that the presence of these resources pose a constraint to development.*

## **AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION AND PRODUCTION**

### **GOAL 8.1: AGRICULTURAL LAND CONSERVATION**

**Long-term conservation and use of existing and potential agricultural lands within the County and limiting the intrusion of incompatible uses into agricultural lands.**

#### **OBJECTIVE 8.1.1: IDENTIFICATION OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS**

**Identification of agricultural lands within the County that are important to the local agricultural economy including important crop lands and grazing lands.**

Policy 8.1.1.1 “Agricultural Districts” shall be created and maintained for the purposes of conserving, protecting, and encouraging the agricultural use of important agricultural lands and associated activities throughout the County; maintaining viable agricultural-based communities; and encouraging the expansion of agricultural activities and production. These districts shall be delineated on the General Plan land use map as an overlay land use designation.

Policy 8.1.1.2 Agricultural Districts shall be based on the following criteria:

- A. Lands currently under Williamson Act contract (i.e., “agricultural preserves”);
- B. Soils identified as El Dorado County “choice” agricultural soil, which consist of Federally designated prime, State designated unique or important, or County designated locally important soils;
- C. Lands under cultivation for commercial crop production;
- D. Lands that possess topographical and other features that make them suitable for agricultural production;

E. Low development densities; and

F. A determination by the Board of Supervisors that the affected lands should be preserved for agricultural production rather than other uses.

Policy 8.1.1.3 The boundaries of Agricultural District overlays shall be based on existing land features including but not limited to soil types, rivers, ridgelines, and other visibly evident features or, otherwise, shall follow legal property boundaries.

Policy 8.1.1.4 The procedures set forth in *The Procedure for Evaluating the Suitability of Land for Agriculture* shall be used for evaluating the suitability of agricultural lands in Agricultural Districts and Williamson Act Contract lands (agricultural preserves). The procedures shall be developed, reviewed, and revised, as appropriate, by the Agricultural Commission, and approved by the Board of Supervisors. Revisions to the procedure shall not constitute a General Plan amendment.

Policy 8.1.1.7 All agricultural lands in active production or determined by the Agricultural Commission to be suitable for production shall be incorporated into an Agricultural District following suitability review.

### **MEASURE AF-J**

Complete an inventory of agricultural lands in active production and/or lands determined by the Agricultural Commission to be suitable for agricultural production. Once the inventory is complete, perform a suitability review (consistent with Policies 8.1.1.1, 8.1.1.2, 8.1.1.3, and 8.1.1.4) and amend the Agricultural District boundaries as appropriate. [Policy 8.1.1.7]

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On June 30, 2009, the Board of Supervisors supported Measure AF-J by giving direction to the Agriculture Department to continue the process of identifying parcels that should either be included or removed from the Agricultural Districts.

The Department submitted the following supporting documentation:

■ **Direct staff to continue work on review and update of Ag Districts (Measure AF-J)**

Agricultural staff is in the process of reviewing the previously identified parcels for the additions to agricultural districts by:

- 1) General Plan Land Use designations;
- 2) Parcel size;
- 3) Elevation;
- 4) Slope (<50%);
- 5) Soil type;
- 6) Proximity to existing agricultural districts; and
- 7) Present land use.

Agricultural staff is also in the process of reviewing parcels for the deletion from agricultural districts by:

- 1) Parcel size;
- 2) Current land use;
- 3) Adjacent land use; and
- 4) Island effect.

The timeline for completion of this task is estimated to be 7-12 months which includes the analysis of the parcels, Agricultural Commission reviews and recommendations that will take several meetings, Planning Commission reviews and recommendations and Board of Supervisors hearing/adoption.

The tentative timeline is as follows:

- » Staff to analyze/finalize proposed parcels – June 2009
- » Present staff analysis to Ag Commission – July 2009
- » Ag Commission to finalize recommendations - August 2009
- » Stakeholder input – August/September
- » Update BOS on progress - September 2009
- » Begin CEQA process - September 2009
- » Planning Commission hearing/recommendation – Sept/Nov 2009
- » BOS hearing/General Plan Amendment – December 2009

The cost of completing the implementation of Measure AF-J is estimated to be approximately \$36,000.

### **BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MINUTES JUNE 30, 2009**

**60. 09-0844** Development Services Department submitting a five-year review of the 2004 General Plan, providing a review of the assumptions of the plan, population, and job growth trends, and providing an opportunity to discuss desired amendments and program directives; and further, to confirm the 12-month action plans set forth in prior General Plan Implementation workshops on biological resources, agriculture, and Economic Development. (Cont'd 6/22/09, Spec. Mtg.)

*PUBLIC COMMENT:*

*A. Marinaccio RE: Shingle Springs. Receive and file report as Report #1. But do not meet guidelines for the 5 year review of General Plan. Look at glitches and see what needs to be done to change them.*

**A motion was made by Supervisor Sweeney, seconded by Supervisor Santiago, to receive and file this item as amended as the 12 month action plan to work towards the 5 year update which is due in 2011.**

**Yes: 5 - Knight, Sweeney, Nutting, Briggs and Santiago**

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#### **ADVANTAGES TO BEING INCLUDED INTO AN AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT**

*If you have plans to start an agricultural operation, particularly a vineyard and winery, the Agricultural District overlay allows more “by right” accessory uses pursuant to the El Dorado County Code Section 17.14.200 Wineries, especially if your parcel is 10 to 19.9 acres or zoned Residential Estate (RE) or Residential Agriculture (RA) .*

*The Agricultural District overlay maintains the rural character of the county and protects the important agricultural areas for future agricultural opportunities.*

*Additionally, if your property currently has a General Plan Natural Resource (NR) Land Use Designation, it has a minimum parcel size of 40 acres. Based on General Plan Policy 2.2.2.2 (above), the minimum parcel size is 20 acres with the ability to reduce the parcel even further if certain findings are made by the Agricultural Commission.*

*The current Ranch Marketing Ordinance is being updated which may also include additional advantages to agricultural operations.*

**DISADVANTAGES TO BEING INCLUDED INTO AN AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT**

*If you have plans to split your parcel, consistent with the General Plan Rural Residential (RR) Land Use Designation and current zoning, you may not be able to split your parcel to less than 20 acres. Other factors may also preclude the splitting of a parcel such as road access, etc.*