





Office of  
**AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER**

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**Agricultural Commissioner**  
Henry S. Gonzales

**Chief Deputy**  
Susan Johnson

August 8, 2008

Mitch Glaser  
County of Los Angeles  
Department of Regional Planning  
320 West Temple Street, Room 1352  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Subject: Notice of Preparation - One Valley One Vision, Update to Santa Clarita Valley-wide Area Plan for Los Angeles County

Dear Mr. Glaser:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the scope and content for the environmental document for the One Valley One Vision project. The comment deadline is August 26, 2008.

**Project Description:** The One Valley One Vision (OVOV) is a joint effort between the County of Los Angeles, City of Santa Clarita, and Santa Clarita Valley residents and businesses to create a single vision and guidelines for the future growth of the valley and the preservation of natural resources. The Area Plan will include the County communities of Stevenson Ranch, Castaic, Val Verde, Agua Dulce and the future Newhall Ranch; and the City of Santa Clarita and its four communities of Canyon Country, Newhall, Saugus and Valencia. The County will adopt a new Area Plan to replace the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, and prepare its own EIR; and the City of Santa Clarita will adopt a new General Plan and EIR. There will be two EIRs that evaluate portions of the project.

**Comments:** The Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's staff comments on the following topics: Agricultural Soils, Water, Air Quality/ Microclimates, Pests and Diseases, and Land Use Incompatibility. Ventura County evaluates projects according to the thresholds and methodologies set forth in the Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines. The Guidelines are viewable at: [www.ventura.org/planning](http://www.ventura.org/planning) under "Ordinances and Regulations." The Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's staff recognizes that other jurisdictions may use different thresholds of significance in their evaluations.

**Agricultural Soils.** This evaluation pertains to the amount of farmland that will be

converted to a non-agricultural use. Farmland is identified and classified on the Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Important Farmland Inventory. The scope and content of the One Valley One Vision EIRs should include identifying the classes of farmland soils, their locations, and the number of acres of each class that are intended to be converted to non-agricultural uses. The EIRs may propose mitigation measures that can be uniformly applied. The Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's Office is currently evaluating proposals for standard mitigation measures from existing uniformly applied policies that limit the loss of agricultural soils in Ventura County. Los Angeles County and City jurisdictions may have uniformly applied policies that could serve as standard mitigation measures. If Los Angeles County and the City jurisdictions deem that the amount farmland to be converted to urban uses under One Valley One Vision is significant with unavoidable environmental effects, the EIRs should include consideration and adoption of a Statement of Overriding Considerations pursuant to CEQA for each EIR. This will allow the proponents of individual projects to cite the One Valley One Vision EIRs as having previously identified and considered the loss of agricultural soils as each subsequent project is evaluated.

**Agricultural Water.** This evaluation pertains to the effects on the local area's quantity from the conversion of agricultural water to non-agricultural uses as well as on water quality in discharges and run-off. The Ventura County Initial Study Guidelines do not quantify a general significance threshold for water quantity; the evaluation is case-by-case. The significance threshold for agricultural water quality aims to identify and reduce Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) to no greater than 1200 milligrams per liter in the impact area. The Ventura County Water Resources Division also evaluates the effects of projects on this resource. The scope and content of the One Valley One Vision EIRs should include these subjects.

**Agricultural Air Quality and Microclimates.** This evaluation pertains to increased dust or harmful emissions from new non-agricultural projects or a decrease in solar access on adjacent farmland from new tall structures. The Ventura County Initial Study Guidelines thresholds of significance for increased dust and decreased solar access are 10 percent, respectively. The Ventura County Air Pollution Control District also evaluates the effects of new projects on this resource. The scope and content of the One Valley One Vision EIR should include these subjects.

**Agricultural Pests and Diseases.** This evaluation pertains to the introduction of agricultural pests or diseases into nearby agricultural areas. The Ventura County Initial Study Guidelines do not quantify a significance threshold; the evaluation is case-by-case. The analysis considers the types of new uses that will be permitted adjacent to existing agricultural land and focuses on reducing vectors and dust from any new uses.

**Land Use Incompatibility.** This evaluation pertains to the introduction of incompatible uses adjacent to agricultural areas. The Ventura County Initial Study Guidelines consider most human intensive uses within 300 feet of irrigated agriculture to pose a significant effect on agricultural resources. Mitigation measures may include site re-design with extended setbacks and/or other measures such as fencing and vegetative screening. The Ventura County Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee (APAC) adopted the Agricultural/Urban Buffer Policy in July 2006 to provide application and design standards for such measures. The Buffer Policy is viewable at: [www.ventura.org/agcommissioner](http://www.ventura.org/agcommissioner) under "Land Use Planning." The policy includes an optional 150-foot extended setback with a vegetative barrier as an alternative to the policy standard 300-foot setback. Distances are measured from new structures or human intensive outdoor areas on the project site to the common lot boundary line with the off-site adjacent farmland. This allows the farm property owner to have maximum use of his farmland. The APAC Buffer Policy may be updated to include a set of reduction and waiver criteria that have been used in APAC's project evaluations. These include small project parcel size, un-farmable areas immediately adjacent to the project site, extensive existing vegetative screening, etc. The scope and content of the One Valley One Vision EIRs should include this topic.

This communication has been reviewed by Ventura County Chief Deputy Agricultural Commission Susan Johnson.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

If you have any questions about this response, please contact me at the telephone number or email address below.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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