



Land Use News

March 26, 2010

Here we go! The Revised General Plan Update Is Here!

On March 25, the County at last released its second version of the draft General Plan Update. According to RMA (County Planning), this draft comprises about 2200 pages (about 470 pages for the Goals & Policies Report, 630 pages for the Background Report, 930 pages for the Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report, and 170 pages for the new Climate Plan), including about 150 figures (maps, graphs, etc.).

Boy, are we going to be busy for the next 60 days (the public comment period is scheduled to close on May 27)! To let the Supervisors and County residents know we're on the job, TCCRG and 21 other concerned organizations today delivered a joint letter to the Board of Supervisors and also sent a press release to all local-area press. Copies of our letter and the press release are inside on pages 3 & 4 ...

If you can help review and analyze this new draft, please contact us ASAP! If policy and environmental document analysis isn't your thing but you'd still like to help – we also need volunteers to assist with publicity, newsletters and event planning – all actions that can help raise awareness of the importance of this general plan to the future of Tulare County. The more people know about it and speak up, the stronger our voices. Get in touch!

OTHER NEWS – We've been busy!

RECENT TCCRG POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS We've been spreading the word about the General Plan Update and the critical importance of sound land use planning for a sustainable and healthy future for our county. Our most recent power point presentations were to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Porterville on January 10, to the League of Women Voters in Visalia on February 16, and to the Breakfast Rotary Club in Visalia on February 25. As always we were energized and inspired by the good questions and discussion that followed each presentation. If you are a member

of another organization that would like to have a visit and a program from TCCRG, please phone us at 561-4479 or send us an email at tccrg.info@gmail.com. We'd love to come and talk with you.

TCCRG MEMBERS ATTEND CENTRAL VALLEY WATER FORUM AT FRESNO CITY COLLEGE

Nine TCCRG members spent the day on March 13 at the Valley Water Consortium's Central Valley Water Forum. Mark Arax, co-author of *The King of California: J.G. Boswell and the Making of a Secret American Empire* (the must-read account of the Boswell family's farming and water empire in the San Joaquin Valley), was the Introductory speaker. Dr. David Cehrs then addressed the sustainability of our water supply, followed by Dr. Lloyd Carter asking, "Whose Water Is It?" in regard to State Water Law.

Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla talked about problems and possible solutions in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The ecological issues resulting from our water crisis were examined by journalist Dan Bacher, and Maria Herrera reviewed water supply safety. Six workshops on a variety of water topics filled the afternoon, and the well-attended forum concluded with a debate by State Assemblymember Juan Arambula and Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla on the State Water Bond Ballot Initiative. Kudos to the Valley Water Consortium for bringing together so many expert points of view on our ever-more-critical water issues. Certainly, effective land use planning and responsible growth are increasingly key factors in effectively addressing these issues (and so many others!).

TCCRG AT UPCOMING EARTH DAY EVENTS

TCCRG volunteers will be setting up our booth at Lindsay's Earth Day event on Saturday, April 3 (11-3:00); Woodlake's Earth Day on Saturday, April 17 (11-3:00); and Exeter's Earth Day on Thursday, April 22 (5:00-8:00). We always look forward to events like these because they give us the opportunity to talk with our current members and to meet new ones. Bring your friends and neighbors along, and stop for a visit at these Earth Day celebrations. For a more in-depth activity, volunteer to help staff a booth; the conversations are sure to be interesting, the company's good, and we could use a hand!

TCCRG HOUSE PARTY

On May 6 (Thursday) at 7:00 p.m., a TCCRG house party is being hosted in Visalia. If you're interested in attending this casual event and enjoying a good discussion about sustainable development and a healthier future for our county, call or email us soon, because space, of course, will be limited (to a living room). If we can't accommodate you this time, why not have the next party at your house? It's easy, no one will have to wonder what to talk about, and we travel anywhere in the County! Just contact us; we'll be happy to help you plan.

TCCRGers SPEAK AT PLANNING COMMISSION

Several TCCRG members attended the Planning Commission hearing on March 10 regarding a development (TM805) that proposed to turn a producing olive grove in rural, agricultural Antelope Valley, about two miles north of Woodlake, into 46 residential lots, to be accessed via a derelict county road. TCCRGers joined neighbors of the proposed project in urging the Commissioners not to approve it for the many reasons cited by the citizens who live near it (including issues related to groundwater supply and quality; flooding; traffic; safety; substandard roads; air, light, and noise pollution; and the general unsuitability of a totally auto-dependent housing project in the middle of a rural agricultural area), and because the proposed development would not meet any of the criteria of responsible growth. Only the developer's representative spoke in favor. We're glad to report that the Commission voted to deny the project.

OUR PRESS RELEASE

GROUPS TO SCRUTINIZE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE FOR HEALTHY GROWTH POLICIES

A coalition of twenty two (22) public interest and faith-based groups welcomed the County's release of a revised draft General Plan Update, the "constitution" that will guide development in the County for the next 20 years. In a letter delivered to the Board of Supervisors this morning, the groups announced their intention to analyze and issue in-depth comments on the new draft over the coming weeks.

"We appreciate the effort the County has put in to create this revised version of the plan, and look forward to seeing how the County has addressed the many comments it received in response to the prior draft," said Mary Gorden, Executive Committee member of Tulare County Citizens of Responsible Growth.

Well over 1000 pages of comments from dozens of agencies, organizations, and concerned residents were submitted to the County during the public comment period on the last draft version of the plan. That comment period closed April 14, 2008.

The groups in the coalition will be examining the revised General Plan Update to ensure that the proposed policies and implementation measures meaningfully address the key challenges identified both in the written comments and by the public during workshops and hearings held throughout the planning process: air quality, water quality and availability, protecting agricultural and natural lands from development, and diversification of the economy – while sustaining and protecting Tulare County's natural and cultural diversity, its agricultural and rural way of life, people, and communities. The Plan must also provide measures to address climate change, and to equitably resolve land use planning issues with the incorporated cities and existing unincorporated communities, say the groups.

The organizations of this coalition include: California Native Plant Society; Coalition for Clean Air; Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment; Committee Si Se Puede de Ducor; Committee Unido de Plainview; La Nueva Esperanza de Alpaugh; La Voz de Tonyville; League of Women Voters of Tulare County; Save The Foothills Coalition; Sierra Club, Kaweah Group; Sierra Club, Kern-Kaweah Chapter; Sierra Club, Mineral King Group; Tulare County Asthma Coalition; Tulare County Audubon Society; Tulare County Medical Society; Tulare County Citizens for Responsible Growth; Unitarian/Universalist Fellowship of Porterville; Unitarian/Universalist Fellowship of Visalia; United for a Change in Tooleville; U.S. Green Building Council, Central California Chapter; Visalia Friends Meeting (Quakers); and the West Goshen Committee.

Coalition members hope the revision achieves a strong, effective General Plan that will create a healthy future for Tulare County. They join in encouraging the public to continue to participate in the planning process for this place we all call home.

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OUR LETTER TO THE SUPERVISORS

To The Supervisors of Tulare County:

We welcome the March 25, 2010 release of the newly revised draft Tulare County General Plan Update and Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report documents, and applaud the County's commitment of substantial time and effort to improve the Plan in response to the more than 1000 pages of comments submitted on the initial draft. Thank you.

Over the coming weeks, we will be studying the new draft with great interest. Our review will focus on whether the Plan now satisfactorily addresses the key concerns raised by those comments and by the general public. These concerns relate to how the plan addresses and affects air quality, water quality and availability, protecting agricultural and natural lands from development, and diversification of the economy - all while sustaining and protecting our natural and cultural diversity, agricultural and rural way of life, people, and communities. We hope to see a Plan that, through strong healthy growth policies, addresses climate change, and provides equitable measures to resolve land use planning challenges with the incorporated cities, while also addressing the needs of our existing unincorporated communities.

In short, we hope to see a Plan that protects and provides for all the elements that are critically important to all of us who call Tulare County home. We will issue formal responses to this draft of the Plan by the end of the public comment period.

We sincerely hope to be able to praise the County for a job well done at that time.

[This letter was signed by each of the 22 groups and organizations identified in the Press Release]